

CHAMUNDESVARI TEMPLE IN MYSORE



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MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
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27 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU ROAD
CALCUTTA 700 016

MEMOIR NO : 35

Published by

Director General

Anthropological Survey of India

Government of India

27 Jawaharlal Nehru Road

Calcutta 700 016

Printed by

PRESSCO

1/27, Prince Gulam Md. Road.

Calcutta – 700 026.

Phone : 740541/741026/742419

First edition : March 1975

Second edition : October 1991

I S B N : 81—85579—02—4

Cover : Car (Ratha)

Price : Rs. 280.00 : £ 28.00 \$ 84.00

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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

Seventeen years ago this book was published. The book has gone out of stock. We understand that there is a large demand for this book from lay readers, pilgrims and social scientists.

When we collected data for this book about eight years before its first publication, Indian currency was in terms of rupees, annas and paise. The rate was sixteen annas or sixty-four paise for a rupee. Though this has been totally changed we have decided to retain the old rate of transaction in the book. As a matter of fact, the second edition of the book does not contain any change in style and content. Only a few corrections, addition of a few photographs and minor clarifications have been made here and there.

We are grateful to Dr. K. S. Singh, Director General for permitting the publication of the second edition. We also acknowledge the help rendered by the members of the Printing and Publication Section particularly Shri H. K. Barthwal and shri Pijush Kanti Mukherjee in production of this edition.

B. B. Goswami

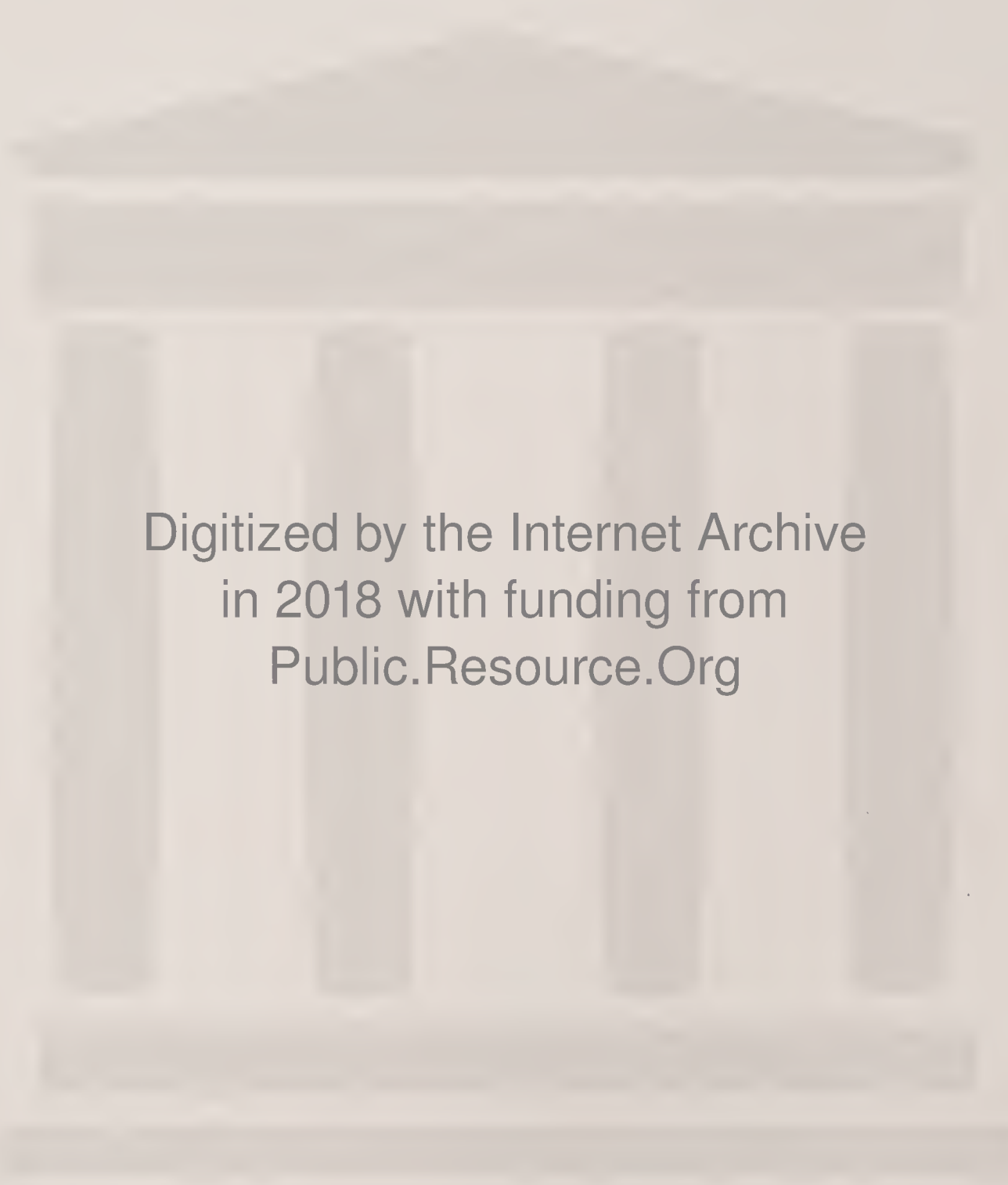
S. G. Morab

Calcutta

3rd October 1991



Car (Ratha) moves forward



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FOREWORD

In a seminar organised by the Anthropological Survey of India at Calcutta on "Research Programmes on Anthropology and Allied Disciplines" in 1967, it was decided that several research projects should be taken up by the Survey on the "Study of Complex Religious Institutions" for a proper understanding of the changing social organisation of Indian Civilisation.

Shri B. B. Goswami and Shri S. G. Morab were assigned the task of studying in detail the organisation of temple functionaries and the traditions and rituals associated with the temple of Chamundesvari. In their study of the sacred complex of Chamundesvari temple the authors have gone beyond the temple proper and have surveyed also the thirtytwo sacred shrines and temples on the Chamundi hills in order to identify the elements of 'little' and 'great' traditions. Whereas to the common people of Mysore, mostly the non-Brahmins, the deity is regarded as the presiding deity of Mysore city and its surrounding regions, the literati consider her as a female force of the Almighty as described in the Sanskrit texts of yore. The report indicates how the cult of Chamundesvari complex has been supported by its association with various castes and by the over-riding patronage of the former ruling family of Mysore.

Director
Anthropological Survey of India
Calcutta

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CHAPTER ONE

SACRED GEOGRAPHY

The Chamundesvari temple¹ is located on the top of the Chamundi hills in Mysore city. The city of Mysore situated at the foothills of the Chamundi hills was the capital of the Maharaja of Mysore. The Wodeyar dynasty traces its descent from Yadava of Gujarat. Nanjundayya and Iyer write, "One Suradevaraya, a descendent of Bhojaraya of the Yadava dynasty ruling in Muttra, came to the country of Karnatic and established a principality in Mysore through the blessings of Chamundesvari Devi. The princes in question was a descendent of that family...Ramakrishna Rao" (Annals of Mysore, Part 1, pages 6 and 7, 1928 : 1 : 48). Chamundesvari is the tutelary deity of the Maharaja of Mysore.

The Chamundi hills rising to a height of 3489 feet above the sea level give a majestic appearance to the city of Mysore. The whole rocky granitoid mass is considered by the people of the city and its neighbouring villages as *sacred*. Earlier Puranic accounts, such as Skanda Purana, refer to a sacred area called, *Trimakuta kshetra* bounded by eight sacred hills, and the Chamundi hills is one of those located on its western side. As a matter of fact, the Chamundi hills in these accounts is referred to as Mahabaladri, i.e. the home of Mahabaleshvara. The Linga temple of Mahabaleshvara is considered to be the oldest temple structure on the hills².

The mythological background of Chamundesvari and the story of killing Mahisasura, who is said to have lived on the hills, has *puranic* background and forms a very important subject of *Devimahatmya* (Hastings : 117-19). This and other stories associated with Chamundesvari are known to the people of the area. They usually learn it from the Kannada version of the *Devimahatmya*, from the wandering Dasayyas who sing the lores of gods and goddesses (Chamundesvari and her younger sister Uttanahalliamma are two of them), from the mythological dramas held at festive occasions usually organised under the guidance of village school teachers and sacred specialists. Recently, a Kannada cinema entitled Mahisasuramardini has helped in popularising the famous deeds of Chamundesvari among the masses of Kannada speaking region.

Earlier it was comparatively difficult to approach the Chamundesvari temple. Inaccessibility to the temple was eased by Dodda Devaraja Wodeyar in 1664 A.D. by providing one thousand stairs which lead to the temple. Now a days, the temple is connected with Mysore city and Nanjangud-Mysore by metalled roads.

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1. Hereafter 'the temple' shall refer to the Chamundesvari temple.
 2. 'The hills' is used for the Chamundi hills.

Real development of the Chamundesdvari shrine took place under the Krishnaraja Wodeyar III. He got repaired the shrine in 1827 and furnished it with a tower. In 1848, he presented the temple with 'Simhavahana' and other animal carts used in procession. One of the gold jewels called 'Nakshthra Malika', a present from him, is of interest, as having thirty Sanskrit verses inscribed on it. At this time non-Brahmin priests were replaced by the Diksit Brahmins.

The contents of the Chamundi hills, namely the centers and institutions, sacred or secular, that have come into existence help us to identify the elements of the Little and Great traditions. From the foot to the top, the Chamundi hills abounds with places which are sacred and popular for various reasons. There are sacred *maths*, temples, trees and ponds; there are sites which are associated with mythological stories of Puranas and Mahabharata; there are *mantapa* and choultries, the former performs both secular and sacred functions, and lastly, there are a few private and public places which draw the attention of tourists and pleasure-seekers. There is also a village named Chamundi Betta, adjacent to the Chamundesvari temple. These centres are largely concentrated near the stairs leading to the top of the hills and on the top of the hills itself. Let us examine these centres more carefully so as to locate the changes these might have undergone over time.

TEMPLES AND MINOR SHRINES

There are about thirtytwo sacred shrines and temples on the Chamundi hills excepting the temple of Chamundesvari. This does not include the various shrines located in the temples and domestic shrines of the Brahmin and non-Brahmin priests. Two important temples are of Mahabalesvar and Narayanaswami situated close to the Chamundesvari temple. The first temple was endowed by the Hoysala King Vishnu Vardhana in 1128 A.D. and in 1620 A.D. by the descendents of the Vijaynagara kings. It is also said to have been patronised by Marnayaka, a minor chieftain of Nayak caste, who was killed by the Wodeyar rulers. Though the temple is under the administrative control of the Mysore Palace, it is not at all popular among the masses of Mysore, nor the authorities concerned make any effort to popularise it. Narayanaswami temple is comparatively new. Priests of both these temples are Brahmin.

Looking at the other temple shrines of deities, such as Chidambar, Mahadesvar, Subramanya, Bhairava, Anjaneya, Maramma, Ganapati etc. we observe that priests are usually of the Brahmin and the Sivarchaka³ castes. Two Malayalees are also the priests of two shrines but their castes could not be

3. Nanjundayya and Iyer (1931 : 605-08) describe the Sivarchaka under the caste 'Tammadi'. Since 'Tammadi', in Kannada denotes a priest, and not a specific caste name, we have called them as Sivarchaka, which term is largely used by the people of the caste themselves.

ascertained definitely. The Brahmins belong to Kannada speaking and Tamil speaking regions whereas the Sivarchaka are only Kannada speaking people.

The deities are variously symbolised, e.g., Isvar in the form of Linga, Maramma as a lump of stone, Narayanaswami in the form of an image. The Malayalee priests worship the Siva and the Krishna.

The devotees of these temples largely belong to Lingayat, Okkaliga, Raja Parivara and other non-Brahmin castes. They are mostly from Chamundi Betta and surrounding villages. There is a neglected shrine of Anjancya which was previously patronised by the Kunchatiga (peasant). The temple of Chidambaresvara is exclusively patronised by the Diksit Brahmins who are Tamil speaking and are the priests of Chamundesvari temple. They, however, have been influenced by the village deity of Chamundi Betta so much so that now they are the real custodian of the Maramma temple. Apart from the castes mentioned above, the family of the Mysore rulers are also patrons and devotees of many of these temples. For instance, a temple called in the name of deity Mahadevesar is patronised by the sister of the present Maharaja. She has arranged for daily worship. Many of the temples, though bear the names of Sanskritic gods, are in reality of local significance. A temple dedicated to Siva is worshipped by the people of Chamundi Betta when they find anything wrong with their cattle.

There are about ten bull (*Basava*) figures on the hills, out of which a colossal statue of a bull (*Nandi*) of about 16 feet in height situated at the 800th stair from the foothills is historically, ritually and from the point of view of tourist interest, popular. This was constructed under the order of the then Mysore Maharaja. Nandi is worshipped by a person of the Sivarchaka caste; his office is hereditary. During the month of Kartik (October-November) the Maharaja visits the shrine for worship. During the drought period the shrine gets special offerings from the Mysore Maharaja.

Other Bull shrines are not of such importance. As a matter of fact, all the priests of these shrines are Sivarchaka, and the devotees are non-Brahmin. The attachment of the bull shrines with rain is also observed in other shrines. For example, there is a shrine called Nirkalluhatti Basava, which was visited by the Lingayats of four neighbouring villages during drought periods. The shrine has now lost its previous importance, and is being looked after by a man of Raja Parivara caste.

During the reign of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, around the foothills at three directions, the feet-shrines of Chamundesvari (*Chamundi-pada*) were constructed. It is interesting to note that in contrast to the worship of the Chamundesvari by the Brahmin, worships of the three feet-shrines were entrusted to the Non-Brahmin Sivarchaka caste. The most important of these three shrines is the *Kibbi Pada*, situated at the stairs leading to the top of the hills, which is largely

patronised by the devotees of Mysore city and neighbouring villages. This shrine is considered by the devotees as sacred as the temple itself. We shall see afterwards the importance of this place in the community-worship made by various castes in their respective villages and Mohallas. The feet shrines have become an important via media for the people to communicate with the main deity⁴ at the temple and get their blessings. These shrines also have helped the castes to retain their own age-old traditions.

There are some ponds and trees which are considered as sacred, and some of the Chamundesvari temple rituals are performed near them only.

MATHS

We have come across six *maths*, all concentrated near the stairs out of which four are about a hundred or more years old. But these older *maths* are generally neglected. Three of these, with Isvar in the form of Linga installed within the *math* precincts, were constructed by a Kuruba (shepherd), a Kunchatiga, and a Lingayat, respectively. The first *math* was originally patronised by a sadhu, but after his death the math slowly went into oblivion. The second and the third *math* also had the same fate. However, another *math* established around 1846 by a Lingayat and patronised by the rulers of Mysore is still popular. Since its establishment, the *math* was successively headed by four gurus belonging to one family. This *math* also could manage to get the patronage of the Maharajas. For instance, Krishnaraja Wodeyar III awarded about 37 acres of Inam land which the institution has kept intact. Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV and his wife showed more interest in the activities of the *math* and made frequent visits there.

Rest of the two *maths* are comparatively new. The history of the establishment of these *maths* (usually referred as Asrama) presents a more detailed account regarding the establishment of *maths* and their association with the local population and adaptability with the changing times.

SHANTASRAMA

Near the 1000th stair leading to the Chamundesvari temple, an Asrama known as Shantasrama is situated. It was established by a wandering Tamil Brahmin sadhu of Advaita sect. He enshrined the deity Parijat-Vaneswar (Linga). He died about 9 years ago. The present head of the Asrama mostly stays at Kenchanahalli Kailasa Asrama near Bangalore.

The Asrama runs on contributions and gifts. It has developed special links with a few villages of Srirangapattana, Mysore, and Bangalore taluks. These villages are largely inhabited by the people of the Okkaliga caste, a dominant caste of the region. In Mysore city, they have links with certain important businessmen. For example, a businessman from Northern India is said to be an

4. 'the deity' hereafter refers to the Chamundesvari deity.

important patron of the Asrama. It has some workers including a lady who visit the patrons at different times of the year and collect contributions. A Malayalee worker, who is of Nayar caste, said that since last one decade he, on behalf of the Asrama, had been collecting money from villagers. The head of the Asrama has association with a few Advaita *Maths* situated at places such as Bangalore, Madras and Tiruvannamalai.

During the important functions of the Asrama, educationists, professionals and heads of sacred institutions are invited to deliver lectures on religious and ethical topics. The walls of the Asrama are decorated with framed photos. The photos are of the present head of the Asrama Swami Vivekananda, Vecra Jnana Desika of Koviluru math (Tamil Nadu), Sankaracharya, Guru Nanak (he has been conceived as a great Hindu who saved Hinduism from Muslim proselytism), Chamundesvari, Meenakshi of Madurai, etc.

SIVANANDASRAMA

The most recent is the Sivanandasrama. It has association with the main Sivanandasrama located at Rishikesh, Northern India. It is functioning from 1961 and has been registered under the Mysore Societies Registration Act. The site, where the Asrama is located, has been given as gift by a local businessman. The Asrama has been established through the efforts made by a family of a Maratha caste. Two brothers of this family, one of whom has declared himself a sadhu and the other an unmarried ex-railway employee, have initiated the venture after taking the blessings of Sri Sivananda of Rishikesh.

In the centre of the big hall of the Asrama a huge photo of Sri Sivananda is kept which is worshipped daily along with a Linga enshrined there. When it was asked as to why the Asrama was located away from the city, the informants gave the following idealised reply, "The vedantic outlook lays stress on hills and dales as most suited for spiritual development and upliftment. Temples on the top of the hills and asramas in valleys have been our heritage. The Chamundi hills afford a splendid environment to develop the spiritual aspect round about Mysore City".

The followers of this Asrama are mainly educated people from Mysore city. A few University professors and industrialists are said to be taking a lot of interest in the activities of the Asrama. The Asrama, alongwith *bhajans* and discourses which it arranges from time to time, has also collaborated in conducting the 18th All India Divine Life Conference, Sarva Dharma Mahasabha in 1965 and published a few booklets in Kannada to popularise the teachings of Sivananda. The walls of the hall of the Asrama have been decorated with the photos of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Jesus Christ, Ramdas Swami (a Goud Saraswat Brahmin saint) and others. All these persons are considered by the organisers as saints who tried their best to give happiness to the people of the world in their own way. During Dussehra festival, specially on the Rathotsava

day, they arrange prayers, sometimes *akhanda* (without break) *bhajana*. On this day, the devotees are offered vegetarian food which is cooked by the members of the organisers' families. As regards the future plan, the Asrama intends to start a high school for which they are contacting important personalities.

PLACES ASSOCIATED WITH MYTHS

Mysore is associated with the legend of Pandava of the epic Mahabharata (Rice : 1897, 278). According to one legend, the throne of the Mysore Palace was in the possession of the Pandavas (Cousin : 1926,12). On the Chamundi hills there is a place called *Kuntikallu* (Kunti rock) which is said to be one of stones with which Kunti— the mother of the Pandavas played a ladies' game when her children were away.

Many of the temple functionaries and other local people hold that Markandeya Rishi, a sage who is said to have written Markandeya Purana, did mediation on the Chamundi hills.

There are also places associated with Mahisasura, the legendary figure whom Chamundesdvari had killed. For instance, there is a cave adjacent to Kuntikallu, known as *Konana Kottige* (buffalo shed), where Mahisasura used to keep his buffalo. On the northern side of the hills there is a rocky hillock known as the rock of Buffalo (*Konanare*) which is considered as a relic of the killing of the Mahisasura by the Chamundesvari. It is said that finally when the demon was on the *kona* (buffalo), the goddess Chamundesvari killed him on this rock only. There are certain marks on the rocks which are considered as the footprints of the buffalo of the demon. On the rock, there are black marks, spread here and there, especially where there are hollow places, and they are said to be the blood stain marks of the demon. By these and other associations with the epic Mahabharata and Purana the local people absorb the Chamundi hills with the other sacred centres of all-India significance.

MANTAPA (PLATFORM)

The literal meaning of the word 'mantapa' is platform. In and around the Chamundi hills there are many Mantapas constructed by the devotees of Chamundesvari, of various caste groups, to pay respects to the deity. They are usually stone structures with concrete or stone roofings. The persons who have constructed these Mantapas at the foothills also offer their services by distributing food, water, etc., to their own caste people. Such observances are done only on the day of the Car festival held at the Chamundesvari temple. In each of these Mantapas, the donor or their descendents place a photo of the Chamundesdvari deity and offer simple worship. The Mantapa situated at the top of the hills is the place where the *utsava murti* ⁵ not only of Chamundesvari but of other deities also are taken. Here, the donors and their caste members get

5. Metallic image replica or deputy of the deity.

the chance of making special veneration to the deity. These Mantapas, which are about twentyfive in number perform both secular and sacred functions. There are three Mantapas which are purely resting places, five remain sacred during the Rathotsava period and become secular for the rest of the year. For instance, near the stairs of the foothills a Mantapa was built about 70-80 years back by a Kunchatiga caste person. Throughout the years, as we have observed, it is being used as a cycle-stand. Devotees, as well as the people of Chamundi Betta keep their cycles here under the custody of an Indian Christian, who has taken up the job with due permission from the Chamundi Betta Panchayat. On the day of the Car festival, the Indian Christian vacates the place, and the Kunchatiga owner cleans and puts a photo of the Chamundesvari deity.

Census of these Mantapas show that Bhavsar Kshatriya, Achari, Jetty, Lad, Kunchatiga, Yadava, Waddar, Brahmin and other castes, and Maharaja of Mysore are associated with the construction of these Mantapas (for two Mantapas we have no information). Seeing the Mantapas, historically, we have observed that there is only one Mantapa constructed by the Mysore rulers which is about one hundred years old. The Sivarchaka, however, claim that they have constructed a Mantapa near the Isvar temple about 200 years ago, which has gone into oblivion. We have been told that a contractor of the Waddar caste is contemplating to construct another Mantapa.

Involvement of the two castes, viz. Kunchatiga and Lad in constructing the Mantapa, is greatest. About 95 years ago, a man of Kunchatiga caste constructed a choultry where the pilgrims could take rest. The choultry is still popular but the management has now been taken up by the Muzrai department (State Government).

To sum up: It appears that the Chamundi hills which is named after the Chamundesvari deity, the family deity of the Maharaja of Mysore, is in the formation of becoming sacred. In a handbill issued by an Asrama on the occasion of Gurupooja celebration (21 to 23 March 1968), the prefix 'Sri' has been added before the word Chamundesvari. Prefix 'Sri' is usually used in honorific instances. In this case, the Asrama authorities tried to glorify the hills by further adding 'at the foot of'. Such characterisations by the people of shrines and *maths* are significant.

To the people who are coming as tourists from faroff places to Mysore, the Chamundi hills means the place where the temple of Chamundesvari is located. The tourist buses, pamphlets, pictures and all other media readily available to them for their information and perusal highlight mainly the significance of the Chamundesvari temple, its geographical location, Mysore Maharaja's contribution in keeping the temple running, good roads, the image of Mahisasura, Nandi (big bull), and the Summer Palace. But for the people of Mysore city and its surrounding villages, the Chamundi hills means a sacred

place consisting of *maths*, shrines, temples, *mantapa*, etc. some of which have lost their past glory, some are developing and some are as they were.

From the point of view of the local educated Hindu, the Chamundi hills is one of the sacred kshetras mentioned in sacred texts and *puranic* stories. The survey of the various sacred centres show that members of the Sivarchaka (a non-Brahmin) caste are the original and numerically dominant priests. The Brahmin priests were brought from outside. Within the last 150 years the Brahmin and the Sivarchaka castes have adjusted their positions. The rituals in the temple have also been changed to a substantial extent but the earlier mode of worship and sacrifices are still often practised outside the temple. This has been discussed in detail in the next chapter. Excepting four temples where the Brahmins perform the daily Sanskritic rituals, in all other sacred shrines the worship is conducted by the non-Brahmin as per the custom of the people of the region. The frequency of worship varies from daily to once a year. In the latter mode of worship, cleaning the sacred centre, burning of lamp and incense, decorating the deity with flower and leaves and breaking of cocoanuts, are the main essentials. In these worship sacred texts and *mantras* are not referred to. However, the striking point is that in many of the sacred centres, the influence of higher tradition on these shrines is slowly increasing. The three feet shrines of Chamundesvari are the places near which the various caste groups can perform their traditional rituals for worshipping Chamundesdvari unhampered by Brahminic practices.

Involvement of castes other than the Brahmin have been observed in all types of centres, namely, *maths* and temples. The neighbouring villages are closely associated with even the minor sacred centres. But the bigger temples and popular *maths* have devotees from distant places also. The sacred geography of the Chamundi hills shows that worshippers of Śakti, Siva and Vishnu have their centres here. However, the sacred centres for Siva Linga and Nandi are more than others in number.

Discussions on *maths*, temples, and other centres show the processes by which a sacred geography develops around a sacred centre. The centres which received continuous patronage have developed, those which could not keep pace with the changing times and patrons, have been neglected, but new centres with more modern outlook have come to the fore. This is very clear in the case of *maths*. The family of Mysore rulers are the foremost patrons in helping the various sacred centres. After that the community of Kunchatiga, Lad, and Lingayats, have extended their patronage. Their association with the minor shrines however of the sacred geography is more intense. In recent years educationists and other important citizens have come forward as main patrons to many of the sacred institutions.

CHAPTER TWO

ORGANISATION OF TEMPLE FUNCTIONARIES AND TRADITIONS

In the previous chapter we have mentioned that the priests at the Chamundesvari temple and other sacred centres were the Sivarchaka until the specialist Brahmin priests were brought to perform Sanskritic rituals at the temple around 1819¹ by the order of the then King of Mysore, Krishnaraja Wodeyar III. This displacement led to the subsequent interaction between the local folk culture and the 'great tradition'. How this happened in course of time, the extent of interaction and interpenetration of different cultural traditions form the subject matter of this section.

About 200 years ago or so, the temples and other sacred centres in the hills were inaccessible to the people at large. When better political conditions prevailed in Mysore region with the intervention of the British, and the death of Tippu Sultan, the then Sultan of the Princely Mysore, the Krishnaraja Wodeyar III ascended the throne. During his regime he endowed grants to the temple and renovated it with a massive tower (*gopur*).

ADMINISTRATION

Since about 1851 the temple is under the direct control of the Palace administration of the Maharaja of Mysore. Alongwith this temple, the other temples such as Mahabaleshvar, Narayanaswami, and other sacred centres, are also under the administrative control of the Palace of the Maharaja. There is a temple known as Jwala Tripura Sundari goddess which is situated on a hillock at the Uttanahalli village about four miles away from the Chamundesvai temple. This deity is considered to be the younger sister of Chamundesvari. The temple of this deity is also under the control of the Palace Management. Besides these temples, there is also a shrine of Gaddige deity² which was said to be enshrined in the hills in a separate house, but it was later taken to the Palace in Mysore city and was kept in a separate shrine there. A *peshkar* (manager) has been placed in immediate charge of the temples and shrines. He is assisted by three

-
1. The year can be exactly mentioned, as the Sanad (royal charter) granted to the ancestors of the present priest in 1819 states that the particular lands enjoyed by the then Sivarchaka priest were transferred to the Brahmin priest for performing the 'Asthabandhana Samproksana' (purificatory rituals) to the Chamundesvari deity as land gift (Bhudana).
 2. The word 'Gaddige' in Kannada means 'a seat'. Deities of Chamundesvari and Uttanahalliamma are enshrined in 'a seat'. They are referred to as 'Gaddige deity'. Throughout this report, therefore, the Gaddige deity mean Chamundesvari and Uttanahalliamma.

clerks who attend to the daily routine work of maintenance of cash, supply of store articles, and other matters relating these temples. The office of the Peshkar is non-hereditary, but those of the clerks are hereditary. All these posts are held by the Brahmin.

Prior to 1851, the administration of the temple was under the then Government of Maharaja through the Revenue Department of the State. But, the Muzrai Manual (1934: 592) indicates that the administration was handed over to the Maharaja by about 1851 to have his full control over the temple with an annual grant of Rs. 11,748.

FINANCES

There were no land grants to the temple. It was decided that remuneration of the temple servants were to be paid both in kind and also in cash. Since there were no other resources except the annual grant by the Government which still continues, the Palace Management introduced certain measures by which some part of the money charged on different ritual services (*seva*) arranged on request of devotees, are deposited in the temple fund. For instance, on each cocoanut brought by devotees, a tax of two paise is levied, and the amount is credited to the temple fund. Golka (fund box) are an important source of income to the temple.

FUNCTIONARIES OF THE TEMPLE

There are a number of functionaries who have different roles in the sacred performances of the temple in the hills. There are two categories of sacred specialists associated with the Chamundesvari temple, viz. the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin. The Brahmin priests are carriers of great tradition through their sacred performances, whereas the non-Brahmin Specialists *i.e.* the Sivarchaka, have certain cultural elements of the local folk culture in their sacred performances. We shall first discuss the non-Brahmin Specialists as they were considered to be the earlier priests of the deity, and then the Brahmin Specialists who had replaced the former.

SACRED SPECIALIST NON-BRAHMIN

The people who call themselves as Sivarchaka are a non-Brahmin caste who are traditionally the priests in Siva³ temples. The Sivarchaka are a separate endogamous group. While they do not have commensal relationship with the Brahmin, they have no commensal taboo with members of the Lingayat sect. They are vegetarian. Members of the caste wear *Linga* (an emblem of Siva for worship), but also don the sacred thread. They bury their dead.

3. Sivarchaka claim that members of their caste were the priests in the famous Isvar temple at Nanjangud in Mysore district about 200 years ago. Brahmin Sacred Specialists at Nanjangud and Mysore do not deny their claim.

The Sivarchaka have domestic priests among their own caste who officiate on all important rituals and ceremonies. It has been observed that they have no *Guru* (religious preceptor) unlike the Lingayats. Usually, the Lingayats are found to give them lower rank, as the Sivarchaka are worshippers of fixed image *Sthavara murti* whereas the Lingayats are not. It may be pointed out here that the Sivarchaka of the hills regard themselves as Lingayats, and members of other castes such as the Brahmin, Raja Parivara and others too refer them as Lingayats in common parlance.

There is a domestic Sivarchaka priest who officiates in religious functions of the lay Sivarchaka of the hills. The priest also served other lay Sivarchaka of the neighbouring areas whenever his services are sought for. The priest is known as 'purohit'. He is said to be well versed in astrology, and has knowledge of Sanskrit. He follows Brahminical ways in performing marriage of Sivarchaka in the hills using Sanskrit *mantras*. He said that he has learnt from his father certain performances, but added that he has enhanced his knowledge by studying books and consulting Brahmin literati on the subject.

According to the Sivarchaka Purohit, they have *Gotra* (clan) and *Sutra* (philosophy) as the Brahmin have. He asserted that he was the only competent person in the hills to tell about the Gotra and Sutra of his caste. He quoted a Sanskrit verse⁴ to explain his point. He said that there are five Gotras, *namely*, Sadasiva, Isvar, Mahesvar, Rudraka and Visvanatha, and the five Sutra are : Nandi, Vrasabha, Veera, Skanda, and Muktaichcha. But when we made enquiries with many a lay Sivarchaka in the hills on this point, they seem to know little about them, though in three cases we were directed to consult their priest alone.

We have observed that some of the Sivarchaka have been creating certain stories to associate themselves with the Brahmin and this tendency seems to be a significant pointer in the process of Sanskritisation of a non-Brahmin priestly caste. For instance, many Sivarchaka consider themselves as 'Shudda Saiva Sivarchaka' (caste of only Siva worshippers). The prefix 'shuddha' (pure) as an indication of raising themselves from the category of simple Siva Worshippers. The way they are trying to do so is quite interesting. There are a few Sivarchaka who tried to trace their kinship relationship with the Tamil speaking Diksiti Brahmins who are the priests of the temple. According to the versions of the three Sivarchaka, which were almost similar, the Sivarchaka of the hills have commensal and connubial relationships with the Diksiti about 50 years ago or so. This is said to have stopped due to certain reasons. The Sivarchaka refused to carry the dead body of the Diksiti, which service was rendered by them previously. This cleavage had led the Diksiti to go to the side of the other

4. Sadasivesvaraschaiva Mahesvarasya rudrakam I
Visvanathasya Panchaite Panchavaktreshu jayate II.

Brahmin. Though this was the contention of the three informants, yet, many Sivarchaka did not subscribe to the view nor the Diksit Brahmin.

Though alongwith the Sivarchaka Purohit, the Diksit Brahmin also officiate at the time of the 'tali tying' (*mang alya dharana*) ceremony during the marriage of a Sivarchaka of the hills, but it may be pointed out that the services of the Brahmin is not always inevitable. The Diksit Brahmin priests of the Chamundesvari and Mahabaleshvar temples have not only the tradition of performing the tali tying rituals during the Sivarchaka marriages, but they do this traditional service at the time of marriages of non-Brahmin castes except the untouchable castes of the hills. In case of the non-Brahmin castes, the presence of the Diksit Brahmin is essential while in case of the Sivarchaka it is not so. We had observed that when at the time of the marriage of a Sivarchaka, a Diksit Brahmin priest who was invited to perform the tali tying ritual, was unable to officiate due to certain personal difficulties, the Sivarchaka emphasise that the practice of calling a Brahmin during the marriage ceremony of a Sivarchaka is existing in the Chamundi hills only. They say that because of the privileged position of the Diksits as priests in the temples, and as an honour of the sacred place (*sthana maryada*), they are courteous to the local Brahmin.

FUNCTIONS OF THE SIVARCHAKA SPECIALISTS

(a) *Types of ritual services* : The Brahmin assistants (*paricharak*) at the temple have the traditional right of carrying the *pooja*⁵ articles to the inner shrine for being offered to the deity and later returned to the respective devotees. But in course of time, gradually, the Sivarchaka doing the function of the guard (*kavalu*) have also taken to the performances. Two Sivarchaka work as guards every day by turn. They do the performance of carrying the *pooja* articles alongwith the Brahmin functionaries. On Tuesdays and Fridays, the services of the Sivarchaka, due to the onrush of devotees, becomes inevitable, as no other Brahmin functionaries have taken to this sacred performance. The Sivarchaka doing this service are benefitted economically, as devotees give them cash gift (*daksina*) for such service.

The Brahmin functionaries usually are not found to take objections to the services rendered by the Sivarchaka. So far as the Brahmin assistants are concerned, they feel that the Sivarchaka are extending helping hand. It may be of interest to note that the Sivarchaka Specialists, while doing so, are trying to emulate the Brahmin functionaries in dress, donning sacred thread, hair style etc. Though the Sivarchaka habitually don the sacred thread, the Linga is also tied to it. But they carefully hide the Linga by tucking it in the waist garment at the time of working in the temple.

5. Articles like coconut, plantain, sandal sticks, camphor balls, flowers, etc. are brought in baskets, plastic bags or metallised plates to the temple by devotees. These are referred as 'pooja'.

Whenever there is great rush of devotees, and if the devotees are in a hurry to return, the other Sivarchaka Specialists waiting at the shrine of Devi's Feet (*pada*) near the flagpost (*dhwaja sthamba*) perform the ritual of breaking the coconut, peeling off of the plantains, bringing the sandal sticks and weaving the camphor *Arati* (sacred lamp). During the hours when the temple is closed, that is, between 1 P.M. to 5 P.M., the Sivarchaka guard on duty, or the one at the Devi's Feet shrine, performs the rituals, and returns the *pooja* articles to the concerned devotees on receipt of cash gifts.

The Sivarchaka also serve the people of the untouchable castes. Before Independence, devotees of untouchable castes had no access to the temple. Such devotees, therefore, used to stand outside the main entrance gate (*mahadwara*) of the temple, and were seeking the ritual service of the Sivarchaka Specialists. The Sivarchaka asked the devotees to keep their baskets containing *pooja* articles on the ground, for they did not touch them, and carried the *pooja* articles inside the temple when the Brahmin priest sprinkled consecrated water (*teertha*), and completed the ritual offering to the deity. The Sivarchaka returned the *Prasada*⁶ to the devotees of untouchable castes. Though, due to the legislation, there is no bar for entry in the temple by the people of untouchable castes, yet it is our observation that many a devotee of these castes voluntarily refrain from entering the temple, but they still seek the services of the Sivarchaka.

As described in the preceding chapter, there are a number of Saivaite centres with which the Sivarchaka are intimately associated. When the Brahmin specialists replaced the Sivarchaka, the latter retained the function of the guard. Now there are seven Sivarchaka functionaries holding the office of the guard hereditarily. The function requires that they have to guard the temple along with the Reserve Police posted there. There is the office of the supervisor (manager) which is held by a Sivarchaka hereditarily. He supervises over the Sivarchaka guards by giving them work according to the schedule of the temple. Two Sivarchaka hold similar offices at the Mahabaleshvar temple ; one office is held hereditarily, and the other, on temporary basis, as in the latter case there was no hereditary incumbent available. In the Narayanaswami temple, two Sivarchaka are holding hereditary offices. Besides these functions, some Sivarchaka are priests in the minor sacred centres of this hills. Alongwith the duties of the guard and priesthood, the Sivarchaka Specialists are doing certain sacred performances in the Chamundesvari temple and shrines of other deities which are described here.

6. Prasada means the *pooja* and food articles which are consecrated at the temple by the Brahmin and Sivarchaka Specialists, and which are returned to the devotees.

(b) *Worship of vehicles* : It is common practice that many Hindu of Mysore and neighbouring areas, after buying an automobile (such as lorry, motor car, bus, jeep, scooter, etc) take it to the Chamundesvari temple for performing worship. The vehicle is parked in front of the temple facing the deity. A Sivarchaka takes up the role of the priest. He first of all sprinkles water over the already washed vehicle, and then applies *vibhuti* (sacred ash), turmeric powder and sandal paste on all important parts of the vehicle. He also applies vermilion, and decorate the vehicle with flowers. Lime is placed beneath the wheels. Lime is thrown on both sides as a symbolic warding off of evil eyes. Then coconuts are broken, plantains are peeled off, sandal sticks are burnt, and camphor *arati* is weaved. The prasada is distributed to the concerned persons. The vehicle moves on treading the lime placed at the wheels. The priest receives cash gift from the party.

We observed that mostly one of the sons of the Sivarchaka specialists of the Mahadesvar shrine is performing the worship of vehicles. On one occasion, however, we observed that a Brahmin cook of the temple was doing this function when the Sivarchaka functionary was not available on the spot.

(c) *Worship of the Feetshrine* : Near the flag-post in the Chamundesvari temple, there is a shrine of the Feet of the Goddess (*pada*). The Sivarchaka functionaries of the temple claim that they have the traditional right of maintaining this shrine. The Feet-shrine is situated at the central place where the devotees pass through. Many a devotee salute the Feet-shrine before entering the temple and apply the vermilion placed at the shrine on their forehead. Sometimes, the attending Sivarchaka applies the vermilion on the forehead of the devotees. As a formalised gesture of respect the devotees are sought to place cash gift at the shrine.

Formerly, any Sivarchaka who occupied the shrine in the morning attended it throughout that day. But when tourist traffic increased, and there was increase in volume of gifts, the Sivarchaka functionaries of the temple arranged for a regular system of rotation among themselves. According to this arrangement, each Sivarchaka functionary of the temple has to attend at the shrine on a regular weekly turn and a one-day basis during the Dusserah festival so as to enable all of them to have equal benefits. But the craze for earning money, among the Sivarchaka through the Feet-shrine increased tremendously so much so that some people of their own caste started calling it as business. The Sivarchaka started placing currency notes of various denominations at the Feet-shrine, and said to have started pestering the devotees to pay as much as possible. This being an irritating practice, some devotees made a complaint to the temple authorities. The Peshkar had then made the arrangements for keeping iron safes at the spots. Two iron safes on either side of the Feet-shrine were fixed and the devotees were advised to put their gifts in these boxes. The

Sivarchaka functionaries were forbidden to attend the Feet-shrine. But the Sivarchaka did not stop at the action of the Peshkar. Since the Feet-shrine was a perennial source of income to them, they united together to fight the issue by themselves. Some of the Sivarchaka one day personally met the Maharaja at the hills, when he was returning to his Palace after completion of the worship at the temple. They prostrated before the Maharaja, conveyed their grievances, and prayed for restoring their traditional right of attending at the Feet-shrine. Then the Maharaja is stated to have restored their right, but with a stern warning that they should not pester the devotees, and any recurrence of such instances in future would make them liable to forfeiture of this right.

(d) *Uttanhalli temple* : The Sivarchaka of the hills were also the traditional sacred specialists in the temple of Uttanahalli goddess who is considered as an younger sister of Chamundesvari. But, later, the priesthood of the temple was handed over to a Lingayat family of the village by the priest about 100 years ago. Since then the Lingayat are the priests, except on two days in a year at the time of the annual festival when the Brahmin specialists at the Chamundesdvari temple perform the rituals according to *Agamic*⁷ tenets. But on the day of annual festival, the *Kanna Kannadi* and other rituals are also held which have been described in Appendix A. We may summarise here the salient features of these celebrations. There are three important ritual elements at the annual festival of the Uttanahalli goddess, namely, the *Kanna Kannadi* (displaying of the deity), the *Bayi Biga* (locking of the mount) performance, and the observance of *Made Huiyyuvadu* (ceremonial cooking). These sacred performances reveal the perpetual continuity of the local folk culture. Some of them have bearing on the Chamundesvari sacred traditions.

(e) *Chamundesvari temple* : As we have said earlier the Brahmin replaced the Sivarchaka in the Chamundesvari temple. The main reason for introducing this change was that the then Ruler of Mysore desired to introduce elaborate Agamic ritual traditions in the temple with the grandiose of the Car (*rath*), and Boat (*teppa*) festival celebrations in honour of the Chamundesvari deity. They also thought that the involvement of the rulers of Mysore with the deity will be more glaring if such things are introduced. Since the non-Brahmin Sivarchaka were not well versed in Agamic ritual traditions, the Dikshit Brahmin were brought to the hills to officiate as priests in the Chamundesvari and Mahabalesvar temples. There were other reasons also for the change in the ritual system. For example, it is stated that since the priests at the temple were the Sivarchaka, Brahmin devotees were not accepting *teertha* or *prasada* from the hands of the Sivarchaka specialists. In order to attract large number of devotees,

7. For more details on Agama, see. pp. 27-29.

it is said that the then *Diwan* (administrator) of the State, Shri Purnaiah, a Brahmin, approved of the change.

One of the Sivarchaka specialists came out with the following story regarding the replacement of the former Sivarchaka priests— “Once the Sivarchaka priest at the Chamundesdvari temple was said to have insulted some Brahmins of Alanahalli village, who had gone to the hills on some score. The Brahmin, unable to bear the insult had decided to take revenge on them . They manoeuvred to plant a half-smoked leaf cigarette (*bidi*) in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple in order to prove that the Sivarchaka Specialists had unclean habits of smoking *bidi* inside the temple. This fact was stated to have been brought to the notice of the Ruler, who after verifying the fact, decided to replace the Sivarchaka by the Bahmin. The Dikshit Bahmin who were well versed in Agama were brought to officiate as priests in the temple on the advice of these Brahmins.” Whether the incident had happened or not, it seems that it was largely the desire of the Ruler to introduce Agamic traditions of worship of Brahmins in the temple which transformed the Sivarchaka ritual traditions.

When this transformation in ritual traditions was brought about around 1819, the then Ruler was stated to have taken certain steps to compensate the outgoing Sivarchaka priest and others engaged in priestly service. A Sivarchaka informant stated that as far as he knew there was only one priest at that time, but there were a few Sivarchaka also to assist the priest, and to do other ritual services at the temple. In order to reduce the conflict between the Sivarchaka and the incoming Brahmin functionaries, the Ruler had given certain privileges to the Sivarchaka. A well-built house was given to the Sivarchaka priest. He was also given about 200 acres of land, and right to collect a cess of lone old coin (1/4 anna) from every shop in the State. For collecting the cess, he was give palace honours like provision of a palanquin with eight carriers, eight horsemen, etc. It was also said that gold weighing equivalent to the weight of the priest was given to the priest. The other Sivarchaka specialists in the ritual service were given lands, right to go to their *Vokkalu*⁸ (Patron families) in villages and collect gifts from them. All the other Sivarchaka functionaries were assigned the duties of the guard. It may be emphasised here that though, for the Sivarchaka, the order of the Maharaja was unquestionable, but the various concessions shown to the outgoing Sivarchaka specialists enabled smooth changeover of one ritual tradition by the other. However, some traditional

8. Vokkalu is translated by Banerjee (1966 : 5) as ‘a farmer or tenant’. In the context of our study, Vokkalu, whose family deity (*mane devaru*) is Chamundesvari, are the patrons. Vokkalu families are not only found among the farmer or tenant categories, but also among other occupational groups such as oil pressers, traders, shoe makers, etc. Throughout the report, while describing the patron and Sivarchaka priest relationship, the ‘patron’ is used to mean Vokkalu families.

cultural practices of the Sivarchaka did not become obsolete, e.g. the *Kanna Kannadi*⁹ observance at the Chamundesvari temple.

(f) *Kanna Kannadi ceremony* : Before the Agamic rituals were introduced, it was said that the Kanna Kannadi was the only important ceremony that was observed in the Chamundesvai temple. This festival is also called *Bonu Gudike Habba* (festival of the pots).

The festival is held on the first Tuesday after the fullmoon day in the Bhadrapada (August-September) month. It is said that after completion of this festival alone, the Car and Boat festivals of the deity are held. With the help of 12 silver vessels and a triangular wooden structure, Chamundesvari deity is symbolically made by one of the Sivarchaka specialists in his house. It is called as *Pradhana* (chief) deity. There is a Sivarchaka who has the hereditary right of making this deity. He will also be the priest on the occasion. The Pradhana deity is decorated with the costly sari which was given to the deity by the late Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV and which then was valued rupees one thousand. The Pradhana deity is brought to the inner hall of the Mahabaleshvar temple where it is enshrined on a raised platform. There are also other miniature Kanna Kannadi which are bought to the shrine by members of six different families of Sivarchaka. These deities are considered as the constituent deities of the list of *Sapta Martika*, viz., Brahmi, Mahesvari, Indrani, Varahi, Vishnavi, and Koumari, and the Pradhana being the Chamundesvai deity. The priest of the Pradhana deity gave the above names of the constituent deities; but when we enquired on the point with many a lay Sivarchaka, the latter were unable to explain anything more than that the other miniature Kannadi deities are the younger sisters of the Chamundesvai. Incidentally, we would like to point out that since the Sivarchaka do not seem to have inculcated any Sanskritic rites in their sacred performances, perhaps, the Sivarchaka interpretation of the Chamundesvari and other deities from the purely local conception of village goddesses. The association of the deities with the Sanskritic gods enjoined in the *Devi Purna* (a Sanskrit text) might be a later Brahminic influence. Though it may be a mere conjecture, but the Kanna Kannadi observances do not seem to have absorbed any Sanskritic ritual idiom.

When the seven deities are enshrined by the Sivarchaka priest, the order of the placement of the seven deities becomes significant. The chief Kannadi is placed on the raised platform, and the two miniature Kannadi are kept on either side of the chief Kannadi. The remaining four are placed on the floor below with the above three deities placed on the floor below with the above three deities placed on the raised platform. When we made enquiries on this placement of the

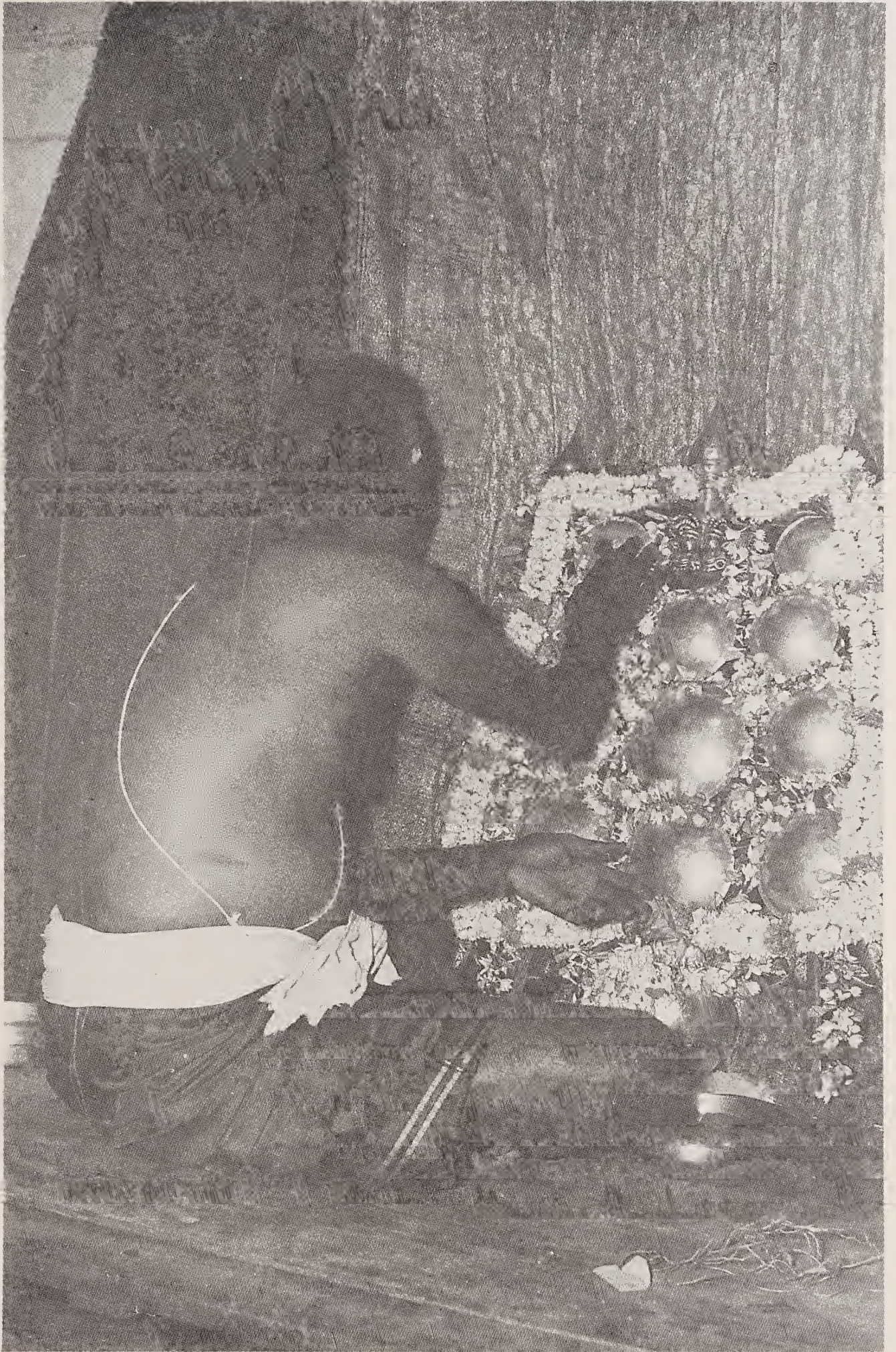
9. For certain common practices, cf. Kanna Kannadi of Uttanahalli amma, please see Appendix A.

deities, the Sivarchaka informant was unable to explain it beyond saying that it was their traditional custom which they still followed. After the worship of the deities, the priest consecrates the *pooja* articles brought mainly by the Sivarchaka devotees on the occasion, and then distributes the *prasada*. The chief Kannadi is then taken for circumambulation of the Isvar temple, carried on the head of an unmarried Sivarchaka girl who has not attained puberty. It may be noted that while the chief Kannadi is carried on the head by a girl, the other Kannadi are carried by boys. This appears to be quite contrary to the custom of carrying female deities usually by unmarried girls who have not attained puberty. The deities are then taken out through the Kuruju¹⁰ gate. At the time of these observances, seven girls of the seven families who are in the menial service (*talawar*) of the temple of the Raja Parivara caste, await near the Kuruju gate carrying earthen pots (*bonu gudike*) on their head. The ritual and marital status of these girls has to be the same as that of the girl who carries the chief Kannadi. These seven girls follow the procession of the Manna Kannadi.

The deities are taken in a circumambulation procession to the temple. The chief deity is held by the Sivarchaka specialists at the entrance gate of the front *Sukanasi* (inner hall) of the Chamundesvari temple. A thin curtain is placed between the original deity (Chamundesvari) and the chief Kannadi at the entrance gate. The Brahmin priest conducts worship to the original deity, and when the *Mangalarati* (sacred lamp) is brought, the curtain is removed, and the Brahmin priest weaves *Mangalarati* to the Chief Kannadi deity. After this ritual, the Kannadi deity is brought inside and kept in its usual place. It may be noted that the other six Kannadi are not worshipped by the Brahmin priest as is done in the case of the chief Kannadi. The boys carrying them, take them home after the worship is done to the chief Kannadi. The Sivarchaka devotees of the hills go upto the rear *Sukanasi* (preceding the sanctum sanctorum) and receive *teertha* and *prasada* from the hands of the Brahmin specialists. Usually, *prasada* on this occasion means flowers and vermilion offered to the deity. The Raja Parivara girls carrying the earthen pots also receive the *teertha* and *prasada* later. On the next day, the *utsava* deity of the Chamundesdvari is taken out for circumambulation through the Kuruju gate. At the time of Kanna Kannadi celebrations which are held in the evening, Palace honours, such as *jilla* (flags), and *kombu* (trumpet) too are sent from the Palace authorities as customary.

Prior to the introduction of Brahminical ritual traditions, the Kanna Kannadi festival was attended by large number of devotees from the neighbouring areas of Mysore city, but as the Car and Boat festivals began to be celebrated, devotees are attending these festivals instead of the Kanna Kannadi festival which has

10 Kuruju is like the entrance gate, which is built with two bamboo poles with cloth covering on the top, with enough space for the movement of the Kainnadi and Utsabva deities.



A Sivarchaka Priest - prepares the Kanna Kannadi deity - Folk symbol of Chamundesvari

almost remained as a formal custom. We may, however, note that the Kanna Kannadi celebration has become largely the affair of the Sivarchaka and the Raja Parivara caste, and the Brahmin specialists participate to a limited extent of accepting certain traditions like the waving of Mangalarati to the chief Kannadi, and taking the *utsava* deity through the Kuruju gate. This is, perhaps, an example of the reciprocal ritual obligation, and co-existence of different cultural traditions.

(g) *Worship of Gaddige Amma*: The Sivarchaka specialists are the priests at the shrine of Gaddige Amma deity in the Palace of the Maharaja in Mysore city. Formerly, the deity were said to be enshrined in a house near the Chamundesvari temple, which is known as the 'Gaddige Mane' (house of Gaddige deity). When the Gaddige deity were taken to the Mysore Palace in deference to the wishes of the Maharaja, the Gaddige Mane became the residential quarter of the Peshkar since then.

The Gaddige deity at the Palace shrine constitute two metalled images of the deities, viz., Chamundesvari and Uttanahalli Amma. The Sivarchaka functionaries of the temple at the hills perform the daily rituals. On Fridays and Tuesdays, the images are taken in procession¹¹ in the Palace compound in a palanquin.

When the original stone images of Chamundesvari and Uttanahalli Amma were installed in the respective temples, the Sivarchaka are said to have arranged a separate shrine where they had consecrated the metalled images of the deities, which are known as the Gaddige deity. Some families of the Sivarchaka too seemed to have consecrated metalled images, which they used to carry to their patron families outside the hills. It was stated that the Sivarchaka specialists, before the Brahmin specialists came to the hills, had acquired traditional clientele of the devotees visiting the temple from the rural hinterland for the purpose of pilgrimage. Personal contact between devotees and the Sivarchaka specialists had helped some devotees in accepting the deity as their family deity. The Sivarchaka began to take the Gaddige deity to such families who bestowed patronage by giving gifts and other items. This had helped the Sivarchaka to eke out their living, and slowly it developed into a regular system.

The Sivarchaka perform rituals to their Gaddige deity in the following manner. While performing worship, they cover their mouth with a piece of cloth. They have to wear wet clothes at the time of worship. The Gaddige deity are given sacred bath (*abhishek*) in water, and sometimes in milk, if *abhishek* in milk is to be performed. After the bath, sacred ash, sandal and turmeric paste are

11. The Gaddige deity are not taken out for procession in the Palace compound during *Maramma* (village goddess) festival in the month of Magh (February-March), and also at the time of Car festivals of other temples situated inside the Palace compound, viz., Trinesvar etc.

applied, and the deity are decorated with ritually pure (washed) cloth and flower. Formerly, devotees gave lemon colour sari and other garments to the deity with which the deity were decorated, but now devotees are not giving gift of sari to Sivarchaka as gift, but instead, to the temple authorities. The Sivarchaka priests of the deity offer rice, which is cooked by them. Pooja articles are offered, and with weaving of camphor lamp *arati* the rituals conclude. Traditionally, no chanting at the time of worship is made, but now-a-day as it is said, many Sivarchaka priests have learnt chanting of *Astotter* (108 names), *Sahasranama* (1000 names) of the Chamundesvari deity in Sanskrit forms which are available in vernacular print. *Sahasranama* in other shrines are also chanted. For example, the Sivarchaka priest at the Nandi shrine conducts his rituals by chanting *Sahasranama* of the Basavesvar deity.

The Sivarchaka who have the Gaddige deity shrine perform the rituals regularly on Fridays. Occasionally, a patron devotee may go to the Sivarchaka priest at the hills in order to fulfil a vow made to the deity, and seek the services of the Sivarchaka priest to conduct worship at the shrine of the Gaddige deity, and also arrange for the worship at the Chamundesvari temple. Thus, the Sivarchaka priests through the mobile Gaddige deities and with their sacred performances propagate the belief of the Chamundesvari deity among the people of the rural hinterland. As regards Vokkalu, they feel that they get the blessings of the deity at their own village through the Sivarchaka priests.

PATRON AND PRIEST RELATIONSHIP

The Sivarchaka specialists of the hills claim that they had patron families (Vokkalu) from several villages in 120 *Taluks* (a division) of eight districts of former Mysore state, viz., Mysore, Mandya, Bangalore, Hassan, Tumkur, Chikmangalore, Kolar and Shimoga, the area where the Sivarchaka used to carry the Gaddige deity. As stated earlier, some Sivarchaka traditionally possess the metalled image replicas of the Chamundesdvari and Uttanahalli deities. There are other deities also, namely an image of a *Linga*, two wooden plates of *Veerabhadra* (attendant of Siva), images of bulls and horses. These deities were carried in a cane basket by the Sivarchaka priests. They were carried on bulls, and not in buses etc., for in the latter case, the deity may be profaned due to the touch of the people of other castes communting in the vehicle. Due to several reasons, the traditional practice of carrying the Gaddige deity to the patron families living in villages has undergone certain stresses and strains, which seem to have also resulted in the widening gap between the patron and Sivarchaka priest relationship.

The Sivarchaka specialists of the hills claim the entire area of former Mysore as their socio-cultural hinterland, but many of them could not mention the names of Villages other than those in Mysore, Mandya, Hassan and Bangalore districts.



Devotees waiting to receive *Teertha* and *Prasada*

The priest of the Kanna Kannadi deity said that five families of the Sivarchaka in the hills possess the Gaddige deity. Those families alone had the traditional privilege of carrying the Gaddige deity to the patron families. But he was unable to provide any information about the number of such patron families and the names of villages. Due to divisions of patron families, the concerned Sivarchaka families have no clear idea about their patron families. Of course, one of the reasons for the ignorance appears to be the indifference shown by the Sivarchaka to the institution of carrying the Gaddige deity. It may be mentioned here that when we made enquiries with one of the Sivarchaka whose family is said to be possessing the Gaddige deity, he cryptically remarked : “ Who bothers to know about the Gaddige deity ? From the time of our father, our people have not been interested in the ‘affair’ ”. Since no records are maintained by the Sivarchaka priests, they were unable to give exhaustive details on the patron families living in villages. At present nine percent among those five families who are found to be associated with carrying the Gaddige deity, gave information on the Gaddige deity, based on their memory and experience. Though the information provided to us is scanty, we may say that it would be helpful in understanding the Sivarchaka priest and patron relationship in the context of the worship of the Chamundesvari, and the Gaddige deity.

The nine persons who gave us information described the precise nature of their sacred performances with reference to the changed socio-cultural factors, attitudes of patron families towards the priests, economic aspects etc. Since the tradition of the worship of the Gaddige deity has bearing on the cultural traditions of the Sivarchaka, an attempt is made to describe the specific cases succinctly in order to delineate the contemporary picture of the Sivarchaka priests *vis-a-vis* their patrons. We have to make it clear that the Sivarchaka informants gave the information about the villages they knew and remembered, and conveniently omitted those patron families with whom their connections have been severed due to the discontinuance of the traditional service since a long time. Therefore, the information given here is not exhaustive.

Case 1: The Sivarchaka mentioned three villages in Krishnarajanagar taluk in Mysore district where the number of patron families is twelve. They all belong to the Namadhari Okkaliga (peasant) caste. Every year the priest visits these villages during harvest, and distributes the *prasada* of the Gaddige deity. The Prasada consists of broken coconut, plantain, and vermilion. Each patron family gives him usually two seers of paddy. In one of the three villages, the patrons make arrangements for the observance of the Chamundesvari festival once in five years when the priest is invited to bring the Gaddige deity without which the festival cannot be observed. Usually in a village, there will be a separate house reserved for enshrining deities, which is known as ‘Devara Mane’ (a house for deities). On such occasions patron families invite their kin. The

Sivarchaka priest worships the Gaddige deity, and offers sweet dish (*Kajjaya tuppa*) prepared in ghee. For such sacred performances the patron families give gifts in kind like cloths, grains, etc. and also in cash. Other patron families also arrange for the worship. Though gifts are usually considerable on such occasions the priest thinks that these are not commensurate with the trouble he takes in carrying the Gaddige deity and sometimes taking helpers etc.

Though he is visiting the patron families in the villages, he is not interested in continuing the practice of carrying the Gaddige deity, or distributing Prasada. One of the reasons is that the patrons are not liberal in giving gifts. Formerly, the grain was measured in seers, but now they are given in winnows, that is, in lesser qualities. Previously, it was the practice that gifts of garments were given to the priest, but now the patrons give gifts to the temple authorities. Another reason stated is that due to the betterment of transport facilities patrons visit the priest at the hills personally, and arrange for the worship. On such occasions the patrons may give cash gifts.

Case 2 : The informant stated that he knew of one village in Mysore taluk, where there are four Lingayat patron families. He used to visit this village previously. The last visit was about ten years ago. He has another village in T. Narsipur taluk in Mysore district where the number of patron families is 20 and all of them belong to the Lingayat. In 1965 he visited this village. In Malavalli taluk of Mandya district, he has a village consisting of 60 patron families of Ganiga (oilmen) caste. Here he had taken the Gaddige deity about nine years ago. In Heggada Devanakote taluk in Mysore district also there are a few villages, but patron families from these villages are not known to the priest due to the discontinuance of the traditional service during his father's life-time.

The priest is working as a primary school teacher in a nearby village. He has the duties of the guard in the temple which he has given to his sister's husband temporarily. His adult son has taken up to trading in selling of picture-posts of tourist interest in Mysore at the hills. In view of the different occupations followed, the informant does not show much interest in the performance of his priesthood.

Case 3 : He has three villages in Krishnarajnagar taluk with fortyfour Lingayat patron families. In mysore taluk, there are five villages with forty Lingayats, two villages with eighteen Okkaliga, and one village with sixty Holey (untouchable) caste patron families. In Srirangapatna taluk in Mandya district, he has three villages with twentysix Okkaliga patron families, and in T.Narsipur taluk also he has two villages with ten families of Lingayat patrons.

Though he has a large number of patrons distributed in different villages, he said that he has not visited the villages since nearly fifteen years. One of the reasons given by him was that he was the lone person in his family, who has to attend to the duties at the temple, and hence he cannot go to his patrons. Mostly,

his patrons are found to visit the hills, and receive Prasada. With some difficulty, however, he visited two villages last year. He was against discontinuance of the traditional service. He said that Sivarchaka priests are experiencing some difficulties in getting gifts. For example, formerly, patrons gave gifts in a special measure (*deva kolaga*) which measured about ten seers of grain, but now this has been replaced by the ordinary five seer measure. The informant stated that he personally experiences some difficulty when patron families visit him at the hills during the Car and Boat festivals in large number. He has to make arrangements for their boarding, etc. in order to fulfil his reciprocal obligation. He sarcastically remarked that his patrons ask for strong coffee; milk for children, hot water for bath, and so on. He said that life at the hills is expensive, and the Sivarchaka who live mainly on patrons and temple service cannot cope up with the modernised patrons who are less liberal in giving gifts to their priests when they visit the hills. In spite of the duties at the temple, he said that he would have gone to his patron families in the villages, but for the above difficulties, he had practically stopped since many years.

Case 4 : He has three villages which have patron families. One village is part of the Mysore city itself which consist of twenty Okkaliga patron families. There is a village in Mysore taluk with fifteen Okkaliga patrons. The patrons from these two villages are said to visit the priest at the hills, at the time of Car and Boat festivals, and give gifts in kind, such as millet, oil for burning lamp at the Gaddige shrine, etc. The priest is not visiting the villages as the patrons are going to him at the hills. There are five families of Okkaliga in a village in Mandya taluk who are his patrons. He had not visited this village for quite sometime. During this year alone, he visited this village and distributed prasada, but he was sorry to state that he could receive only ten seers of paddy. He had incurred an expenditure of nearly ten rupees on conveyance and other expenses, but his income was much less. The gifts received by the patron families involve reciprocal obligation of entertaining the patrons when they visit the hills. Thus, he said, he was put to hardship in both ways. Therefore, he has decided not to visit the village in Mandya taluk unless the patrons promised him good quantum of gifts.

Case 5 : As the informant is working as a supervisor, he is unable to visit the patron families in villages. His two adult sons are working as primary school teachers outside the hills, and they do not evince any interest in visiting patron families. The informant's father was regularly visiting the patrons. There are fourteen villages in Mysore taluk having patrons who belong to Okkaliga and Lingayat communities. Though he is not visiting them, the priest said that many patrons are found to be visiting him at the hills, when he would entertain them and help them in their sacred performances.

Case 6 : In case of this priest, it may be stated that though he is working as a primary school teacher outside the hills, yet he is found to be visiting his patrons during harvesting season, and also when he has holidays in the school. In Mysore taluk he has a village comprising of twenty Raja Parivara caste patron families. He visits this village two to three times a year. In case the patrons desired that the Gaddige deity be taken, he would do so. According to him, usually patron families arrange for the worship of the Gaddige deity whenever marriage is celebrated in their house, or a newly-built house is inaugurated. When patrons visit his house at the hills, his kin who is temporarily holding his office at the temple, entertains the patrons, and renders necessary service.

Out of the three more villages with which he is associated in Mysore taluk, in two villages, there are nearly seventeen patron families of Raja Parivara caste, and in the third village, only seven families of Okkaliga are patrons. Due to the scarcity of water in these villages, the priest is not taking the Gaddige deity. But he is visiting his patron families occasionally, and distributes the Prasada.

Case 7 : This informant mentioned the names of ten villages with patron families. In a village in Arsikere taluk in Hassan district, there are fifty patron families which comprise of twenty Okkaliga, twenty Lingayat, and ten Kuruba (shepherd) castes. The priest had visited this village alongwith his father, about twenty years ago. There are fifteen families of Okkaliga patrons in a village in Hole Narsipur taluk in Hassan district who usually visit the hills, and meet the priest. When they call upon the priest, they give him gift in kind. In Krishnarajanagar taluk, there are three villages with fortyfive Lingayat patron families. In two villages, he said that he receives gifts in good quantity and hence he visits them regularly. In Nanjangud taluk in Mysore district there are four villages where the number of patron families is forty, and all of them are Lingayat. Out of these four villages, only in one village, he receives gifts in considerable measure. The previous year, when he visited that village, he received more than five quintals of grains as gifts for distributing the Prasada of Chamundesvari. In Heggada Devanakote taluk too he has some villages, but he has not been viting there since several years, hence he does not know his patron families of this area. He emphasises that most of the patron families go to him personally at the hills, and give gifts.

The informant said that though he visits some patron villages, he is not much inclined to continue the traditional practice of distributing the Prasada, or carrying the Gaddige deity due to the following reasons : (1) He has no aptitude to do this type of work. Of late he has been found taking part in the political activities of the Chamundi Betta village. To his dismay, his candidature for the membership of the village panchayat was rejected by the election authorities on the ground that he was a temple servant against which he successfully brought a stay order in Mysore High Court; (2) Mostly patrons are visiting the hills and he



Chamundeswari *utsava* murti (Deputy)

does not find any necessity for going to the patron families in villages ; (3) In many villages, the gifts are quite meagre.

He, however, stated that till he is in the job, he would welcome the patrons with utmost respect, and do the honour of conducting the worship in conformity with the local traditions (*pooja maryada*), irrespective of whether concerned patrons give him gifts or not.

Case 8 : He has one village in Chamarajanagar taluk in Mysore district where there are only three Lingayat patron families. About thirty years ago, he remembers to have visited this village with his father's brother taking the Gaddige deity. There is a village in Mysore taluk with five patron families of Lingayats. As the village is very near to the hills, he visits them every year. He said that there were a few patron families in Kanakapur of Bangalore district, but due to the discontinuance of the traditional ritual service since about fifty years, the contact has been lost. The priest said that he knew that many patrons of that village visit the hills, but so far no attempt has been made to establish their broken relationship by either side. He has also one village in Heggade Devanakote taluk, but due to the distance, he has stopped visiting the village. The priest said that most of the patrons from the villages visit him at the hills when he provides them with necessary ritual service, and other help.

He said that he was not interested in taking up this traditional practice as a source of livelihood. The main reason was that the patron families do not give gifts liberally, and in these hard-days, it was difficult to live on the scanty gifts. Formerly, gifts were very liberal so as to provide for good living. He stated that due to some of these difficulties many a Sivarchaka priests are leaving their traditional priestly vocation and taking to new professions like service in school, Government Office, business, etc. He himself has taken to the business of money lending, and this has naturally affected his thinking.

Case 9 : This informant listed seven villages. In two villages in Nanjangud taluk there are twentyfive Lingayat patron families, and in another village in the same taluk, there are one Lingayat and two Kuruba patrons. He said that he is visiting these village every year, but he is not receiving expected gifts and, therefore, he was not satisfied. Out of three villages in Krishnarajanagar taluk, in one village there are Two Okkaliga, two Ganiga (oilman) and one Raja Parivara caste patrons ; in another village, ten families of Ganiga; and, in the third village, eight families of Raja Parivara caste. He complained of not receiving gifts properly from the patron families of these villages. Patron families mostly go to him personally at the hills for the worship when the priest assists them. In a village in Heggada Devanakote taluk, there are some patron families of Lingayat and Okkaliga castes. According to him, the patrons from this village are unkind to him as whenever he visited them they gave excuses that they have not yet harvested crops properly. Therefore, he said that he had

told the patrons of this village that unless they promised nearly one quintal of paddy, he would not visit them and distribute Prasada.

From the nine cases described above, bringing about the difficulties and attitudes in the sacred performance of the Gaddige deity, certain general observations can be made. The Sivarchaka priests engaged in the traditional priesthood of the Gaddige deity do not seem to be keen on visiting their patron families in the rural hinterland taking the Gaddige deity with them, or in distributing the Prasada, regularly. On the other hand, due to the improvement in transport communications, the patron families in the village are finding it easier to visit the temple and also their priests at the hills in person. Usually, the patron families need the Gaddige deity at the time of marriage in a patron's family, or when inaugurating a newly constructed house. Apparently, the priests are not eager to visit their patrons because of meagre gifts given by their patrons both in kind as well as in cash, which, in turn, has the reciprocal obligation of serving them when the patrons visit them at the hills. But a careful look into their occupations shows that they themselves have developed certain amount of interest in non-priestly avocations, such as teaching, business and politics. These are some of the reasons which appear to have been responsible for weakening of the traditional link between the Sivarchaka priest and their patron families within a course of one generation.

(h) *Prasada distribution* : We have observed that two Sivarchaka brothers of the hills have taken up the function of 'distribution of Prasada' to the permanent devotees in Mysore city. The father of these Sivarchaka had himself established some permanent devotees by regularly visiting them at their houses or shops, and by giving Prasada, on Fridays and Tuesdays. The Prasada in this case consists of vermilion offered to the Chamundesvari deity in the temple. Some devotees may desire to send *pooja* articles to the temple through the Sivarchaka. The two brothers have divided the whole area of Mysore city where their devotees reside, into two divisions. One division consists of the entire area of Krisnaraja and Fort Mohalla (municipal divisions), and the other Devaraja Mohalla, and each brother has kept one division for himself. Usually, these priests visit their devotees, and apply vermilion Prasada on the forehead of men devotees of their clientele. This act of the Sivarchaka priests is considered by the devotees as a sacred ritual. He may refuse to do this ritual if proper gifts are not made. In case of women devotees the priests deliver the Prasada in paper packets, or in hand. Their devotees are found among different castes. Generally, the priests will not hesitate to give Prasada even to the people of untouchable castes. They do not, however, touch the latter and apply the Prasada on the forehead, as they usually do in the case of other Hindu. When Prasada is given to the devotees the priests receive cash gifts. The economic benefits appear to be considerably much high in view of large number of permanent devotees. Thus we observe that this is another sacred performance by which the two Sivarchaka brothers of the hills are



A Brahminic ritual tradition

propagating the cult of the Chamundesvari deity in Mysore city through the sacred media of Prasada.

The Sivarchaka specialists in the hills mainly live on various types of above stated sacred performances that they do for devotees, and patron families. Now-a-days, a few educated priests are seeking other avenues for their livelihood. Many of the Sivarchaka enjoy having lands which were originally donated for the temple service, but now mostly they do not possess them; in the cases where a few acres of lands are even now under their possession, they do not receive much yield from their farmers. The remunerations for the temple services fixed in 1922 still continue, which is extremely low. The office of the guard in the temple for example, carries a monthly emolument of Rs. 5.00 and for worshipping a minor sacred centre between Re. 1.00 and Rs. 6.75. However, the Sivarchaka with the patron families, worshipping at the 'Feet-shrine', and attending to devotees at the temple, are carrying on their service at the temple, and also their priesthood. On the other hand, the Sivarchaka of the hills are largely trying to better their economic conditions by drifting away to other more prosperous pursuits outside the hills. The Chamundi Betta village in the hills, as such, does not provide scope for employment. The village has developed due to the existence of the temples, and about forty percent of the residents of this village are found to depend upon the temple service, and occupations associated with the ritual performances. Since an urban centre, viz. Mysore city, is situated nearby, many people are finding scope for employment there. It is said that many residents of this village have gainful employment in Mysore city, who are found to travel from the village to the city everyday, through the thousand stepsway, on foot. The Sivarchaka too have taken advantage of the urban centre in finding employment.

SACRED SPECIALIST BRAHMIN

As already said, when the Brahmin replaced the Sivarchaka sacred specialists, the Agamic ritual traditions were introduced in the temple. Before describing the salient features of the Brahmin specialists, and their sacred performances, we may state that the Agama are Sanskritic and highly traditional, while the Sivarchaka practices appear to be folk or little traditional. We shall be keeping in view this contrasting feature. Late Krishna Dixit, who was a scholar on Agama in the State Department of the Religious Endowment of the Mysore Government and brother of the Brahmin priest of the Chamundesvari temple, wrote in an article on Agama in Kannada, that if the *Vedas* are the *Nisvasa* (breathing) of the *Paramatma* (supreme soul), Agama are the spoken forms (*vanirupa*)¹². Like the Veda, Agama is also *Apourusheya* (superhuman). He says that the whole sacred

12. We do not want to get ourselves involved in the debate, Veda vs. Agama. We only want to highlight the viewpoint of the Brahmin priest of the Chamundesvari temple.

literature on which Indian culture is based comprises of two parts, viz. Veda and Agama (*nigamagama*). By quoting a Sanskrit verse from '*Vedasarah Sivagama*', he implies that the Sivagama is the gist of Veda. He also states that there are many similarities found in the *Vakya* (statement) both in the *Brahmana* (e.g., *Arsheya Brahmana*), and Agama just as *Vakya* in Veda are considered as *Sruti* (Vedic text), *Vakya* of Agama are also held as *Sruti*.

The carriers of Agama traditions in the Chamundesvari temple are the Tamil speaking Samarta Brahmin. They are called Agamika. They are the migrants to the Mysore country from Conjeevaram and Paksiteertha in Tamilnadu. They are followers of *Yajurveda Sakha* (branch of *Yajurveda*) and *Boudhayana Sutra* (philosophy of Boudhayana). They belong to either of five Gotras, viz. Kousika, Kasyapa, Bharadwaja, Goutama, and Agastya. They suffix the title 'Diksiti'. It is not definitely known when the Diksitis migrated to the Mysore country, but they seem to have taken the priesthood of the temple sometime in 1819, as the Sanad record reveals. The Diksitis are also the sacred specialists in important Saivaite temples in Southern Mysore (Goswami and Moreab: 1968).

We noted a few important changes in the Brahminic way of life of the Brahmin specialists in the hills which deserve to be pointed out here. The Brahmin of the older generation are found to be orthodox, following the traditional way of life, but many persons of the younger generation have been slowly changing or westernising. The Diksiti Brahmin, who are the priests in the temple were considered by other Brahmin as of inferior status to that of theirs about twenty years ago, and hence, none was said to be taking food or water in the house of the Diksitis. But nowadays this practice is not followed by other Brahmin. We found that excepting three Brahmin families, who do not still accept the food or water in the houses of the Diksitis, other are not rigid about it. On the other hand, it may be noted that the Diksiti Brahmin are themselves claiming that they are Vadama Section of the Tamil Smarta (members of the Vadama Section do not consider the Diksiti so), and trying to contract marriage with the Vadama. It is said that they were successful in their attempt to secure a Vadama bridegroom to the daughter of a Diksiti Brahmin in Mysore city recently. Most of the Brahmin of the younger generation are found to be keeping 'Badami' crop. going to hotels, which was not the practice previously. It was also observed that they are not using caste marks such as applying sacred ash, sandal paste, etc. and in their dress too, some are westernised.

Before the Agama rituals were introduced there were no *utsava murti* of the deity. But when Agama rituals were brought into effect by the Diksitis, two *utsava murti* were made for the purpose of worship. One of them is a small-sized metallised *murti* which is used for daily rituals (*nityotsava*) i.e., for only circumambulation in the *Prakara* (inner enclosure) of the temple, and the other one is of bigger size which is used only during *utsava* (festival) rituals.



Brahmin functionaries carrying *Utsava* murti



Ritual seva of flower decoration - Deputy Commissioner worships

Generally, the latter image is taken for circumambulation in the Prakara, outside the temple, and also to the sacred ponds and trees during important ceremonies like the Car, Boat, and *Udapotsava*¹³ festivals.

The Agamic form of sacred performances requires many Brahmin specialists in the temple such as chanters of Devi Sahasranama, chanting of Vedic hymns, *Strotrapatha* (singing eulogies of the deity), carries of the *utsava* deities, and also servants for the ceremonial cooking. There are twentyeight Brahmin specialists holding sixty offices including the administrative staff, and also including the Brahmin functionaries of the Mahabalesvar and Narayanaswami temples. Some of the functionaries hold offices simultaneously in more than one temple.

Previously, the offices were held hereditarily, but as and when the offices fell vacant due to death, or discontinuance, the authorities had to recruit new persons, or to tag them with those functionaries who desired to take up such services. It may be noted that out of the twentyeight persons, twentytwo persons belonged to different families, and the remaining six persons were related to some functionaries. These twentyeight functionaries belong to different sub-castes, and sub-sects among the Brahmin. They are : Dikshit six, Tamil Samarta, Telegu Samarta, and Kannada Samarta ten, four, and seven respectively. There is also a Madhva. The Tamil Samarta includes sub-sects like Vadama, and Kandara Manikya, the Telegu Samarta has Velnadu, Mulukunadu, and Telaganni sub-sections, and the Kannada Samarta comprises of sub-sections such as Hoysala Karnataka, Babbur Kamme, and Badaganadu.

From the analysis of the functionaries doing various ritual services, it has been observed that the Dikshits are a specialised caste of priests (*archaka*). One office of the chanter has been held by a Dikshit, but this has been given to him recently when the office had fallen vacant. The Tamil Samarta are dominant in number, and are found to perform all kinds of services. The Telegu Samarta are mainly the chanters. The Kannada Samarta are engaged in the services of the chanter, and *sripada* (carrier of *utsava* murti). Besides some of them attend to general duties. The lone Madhva functionary has the priesthood in a minor shrine, as well as the *sripada* service.

FUNCTIONS OF THE BRAHMIN SPECIALISTS

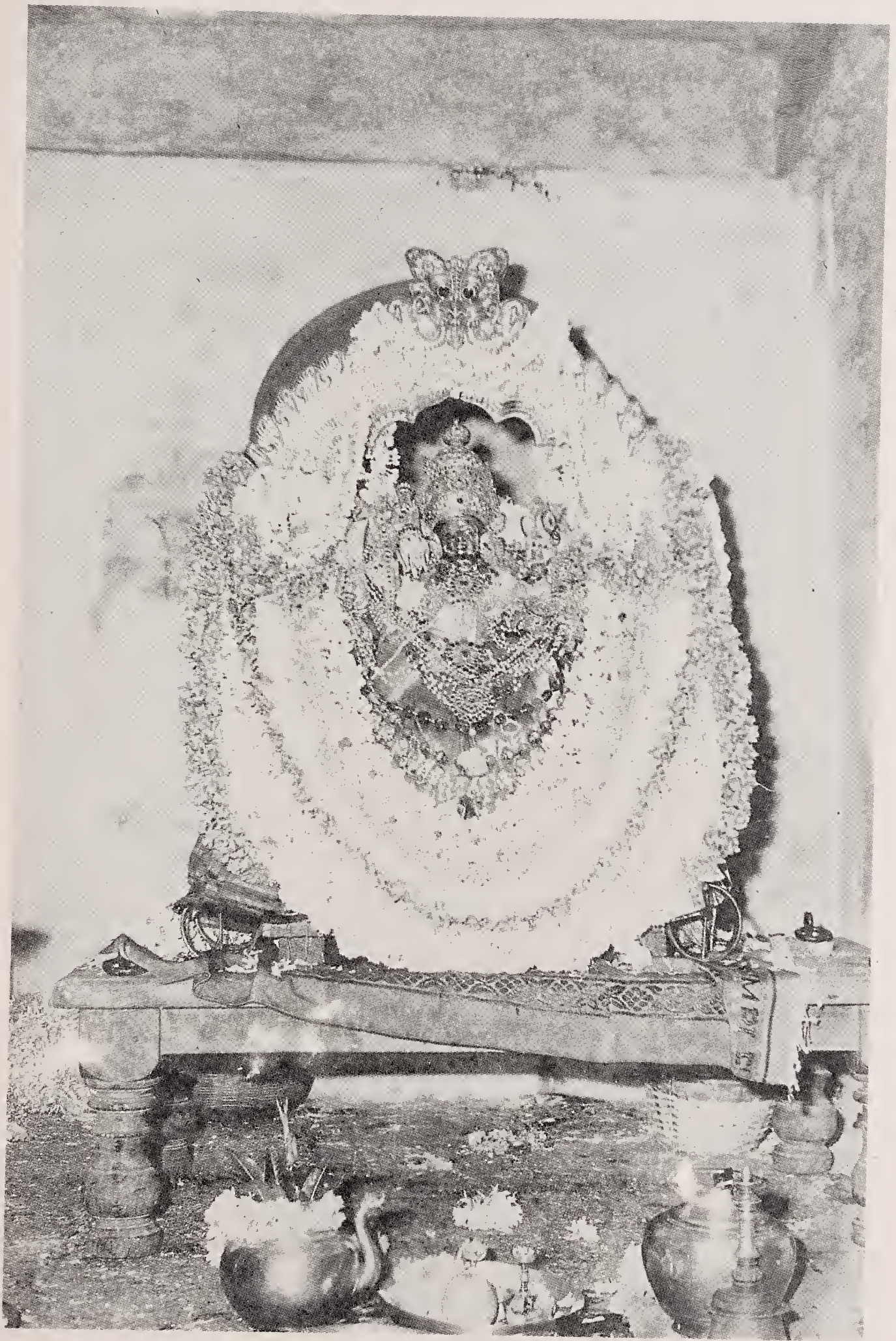
The devotees visiting the temple come into contact with the priests (*archaka*) and the assistants at the inner shrine (*Paricharaka*). The priests give *teertha* to the devotees, and the assistants bring the *Mangalarati* of the deity. The devotees salute the Mangalarati and place their cash gifts in the plate containing the sacred lamp. The devotees give gifts to the priests also.

13. Festivals are observed in winter in honour of Chamundesvari Mahabalesvar, and Narayanaswami deities.

The Paricharaka have to carry the pooja articles to the inner shrine where the priests consecrate them by sprinkling consecrated water (*teertha*) over them. The Prasada is then returned to the respective devotee on receiving gifts. Though this sacred performance has to be done exclusively by the Brahmin Paricharaka, yet, significantly enough, the non-Brahmin Sivarchaka do the service to which the Brahmin do not seem to object as stated earlier. Incidentally, however, one important point which we have already said needs repetition here. The Sivarchaka scrupulously emulate the Paricharaka in dress (*e.g.*, wearing silk garment), marks of sacred ash on forehead, manner of leaving tuft, and even in tone while uttering the names and other details of devotees. More recently, when the Peshkar seriously objected to the western style of cropped hair among the younger Brahmin functionaries, instead of the traditional practice of leaving the tuft, the concerned Brahmin went in for different hair style known as Badami' crop. In this style, front portion of the scalp is completely saved, with the back and sides having the western style crop. It may be mentioned here that promptly the Badami style was adopted by younger Sivarchaka functionaries who too had resorted to the western hair style of crop. Many of the devotees seem to think that the Sivarchaka in the temple are the Brahmin. When a few non-Brahmin devotees were told that the pooja articles are carried by the non-Brahmin Sivarchaka, they were surprised at it.

The Brahmin Paricharkas seemed to have more liberal or secular view as regards the Sivarchakas cooperation in their work. The two Paricharakas have friends among the Sivarchaka. We observed that the two Paricharakas were putting their hands on the shoulders of the Sivarchaka functionaries of their age affectionately, and gossiping with them sitting near the flag-post during leisure hours. Perhaps, this was not a possibility in their father's generation. Brahmin priests are not happy with this development, but they do not bother about it. The *Peshkar* (Brahmin), though not happy, does not yet meddle with the affair which is beyond his administrative matters. But on one occasion the Peshkar took the incident seriously as it had hurt his personal sentiment. It so happened that a Sivarchaka had sought some devotees to salute him by touching his feet. This, according to the Brahmin Peshkar, was too bad because "the Brahmin priests have only the right to seek salutations", and the Lingayats (he used the word to refer the Sivarchaka) had no such right. The Peshkar orally warned the concerned Sivarchaka not to indulge in such behavioral impropriety.

The other Brahmin specialists, namely, chanters, Sripada, and other functionaries, have their own ritual schedule, and attend the temple at the time of worship. Regarding the sacred performance of the Sivarchaka in the temple, they express neutrality. It is interesting to observe that none from this group has even tried to take up this function though many of them are economically hard pressed. However, some of them have devised other means of sacred



Chamundesvari *Utsava* murti - inside shrine



Goddess on Lion (*Simhavahana*)

performances by which they earn some money. For instance, the two specialists at the minor shrines of Ganapati and Anjeneya invite the passer-by devotees to receive the *teertha* of the deities, and ask for gifts (*dakshina*). At the water outlet of the Chamundesvari sanctum sanctorum one Brahmin functionary sits, though there is no shrine as such (but the outlet is considered sacred as it is the abode of deities like Brahma), and gives *teertha* on receiving gifts. The Brahmin cook waits near the kitchen with Prasada and *teertha* which are given to the devotees for payment or gifts. One of the chanters is a blind man. He sits in a corner of the Prakara and seeks alms. The religious minded people, especially women, give gifts to the blind man. The other Brahmin functionary occasionally seeks gift by either sitting in some corner, or sometimes following the devotees.

There are twentyone offices of chanter specialists. These are performed by different functionaries as given below. Ten persons function as *Abhisheka Parayama*, four are for four Vedic hymn reciters, viz., *Rig, Sama, Yaju* and *Atharva*, two as *Sthanik* (assistant), one as *jois* (astrologer), three as *Strotrapatha* and one as *Sshsranama*. At the time of giving sacred bath (*abhishek*) to the deity, the concerned ten functionaries officiate as Veda Parayana specialists. Others have to be present at the time of *Mahamangalarati*, the concluding part of the sacred performance by waving the final sacred lamp, for the particular session, and chant or recite vedic hymns, eulogies, etc. The Sahasranama functionaries have to continuously attend to the ritual services of this category. It is said that one acquires the knowledge of chanting or reciting hereditarily.

Sripada functionaries carry the *utsava murti* before the Mahamangalarati ritual takes place. There are eleven offices of Sripada, besides the one priest of a minor shrine who has also the function of Sripada. The Sripada servants have another important function viz. to take the Prasada of the deity to the Maharaja's palace. The Prasada consists of broken coconut, plantain, flowers, and vermilion offered to the deity. All the Sripada functionaries perform the function in batches. Each batch consists of two persons who do their duties on alternate days turn, and for a period of one month. Sometimes they arrange for proxies when they cannot do the function by themselves.

Every day, ceremonial cooking is needed on both the noon and evening sessions. Cooked rice for daily rituals are offered to the deity, and on festive occasions, other kinds of sweet and salty food are offered. There is a separate kitchen (*devi koota*) for feeding the Brahmin. There are five offices of the function. Thus, the Brahmin functionaries are mainly engaged in the sacred performances of the deity in the temple. Now, a question may be asked as to how far the Brahmin are instrumental in spreading the traditions of Chamundesvari.

Among the Brahmin specialists of the hills, it is noted, there is no system of taking the Gaddige deity as we observed among the Sivarchaka. The devotees who visit the temple come into direct contact with the Brahmin specialists inside the temple. The presence of the Brahmin priests in a temple, itself gives an impression to the devotees that the practices are systematised and the temple is one of the many Sanskritised gods. Within the last 150 years, the vegetarian Brahmin priests have totally abolished the customs prevalent in the ritual system which were repugnant to the vegetarian castes. By doing so, the Brahmin prepared a base for attracting larger number of devotees than it had in the past. The Diksits know it very well ; and they are proud of it.

The Brahmin priests of the temple have been conscious about the impact made on devotees by the interpretations of sacred literature concerning the incarnation of the deity. It may be pointed out here that the father of the present priest of the temple had published a booklet in 1913 on the sacredness of the Chamundi hills (*Chamundi Mahatme*) rendering the story of Chamundesvari's incarnation in the hills, corroborating from Skanda, Varaha and Kalika Purana. The booklet was reprinted in 1967 by the present priest.

The Brahmin functionaries always emphasise the importance and significance of the temple in terms of sacred texts, and they try to associate the temple with the worship of *Shakti* prevalent in many parts of India. While doing so they specifically highlight the Agamic ritual traditions of the temple. As pointed out earlier, the royal patronage given to the sacred performances by the Brahmin specialists helped greatly in making the temple great tradition. Further, as the temple started receiving patronage by different individual devotees, along with the enormous royal patronage, the annual ritual cycle of sacred performances was expanded to include several rituals of great tradition. These rituals, and the ritual services (*seva*) performed in the name of devotees, are the significant media initiated by the Brahmin priests which have drawn the various types of patronage. The elaborate ritual performances have also helped in attracting large number of pilgrims.

TYPE OF PATRONAGE

With the coming of the Brahmin priests and subsequent introduction of the Car and Boat festivals, the nature of patronage shown to the temple by the devotees has undergone many changes. We shall discuss it in some detail here.

The Chamundesvari deity is the family deity of the Mysore rulers, hence, they had bestowed great royal patronage in terms of endowments in cash, gifts of jewellery, gold and silver ornaments, and clothes. We have been able to collect documents on them, from 1914 onwards, except for the period from September 1941 to January 1947, till April 1968. The data are given in two periods, namely, one from 1914-1939, till the Maharaja Krishna Raja IV was ruling, and the other from 1940-1968 with the ascendancy of the present Maharaja Jaya



Srikantha Dutta Wodeyar of the Mysore Royal Family inaugurating the
Procession - A Traditional continued

Chamarajendra Wodeyar. The data on patronage include royal gifts as also the gifts made by individual donors.

The gifts to female deities like the Chamundesvari are made in kind, such as *Parchi* (sari, blouse pieces, etc.) articles, jewellery, gold and silver ornaments. The analysis of the data as recorded in the temple reveals the different types of patronage that are received by the temple. While describing the *Parchi* articles, we have not taken into consideration the petty *Parchi* articles valued below twenty rupees which are perishable and auctionable articles.

Our data shows, the number of gifts of *Parchi* articles worth between Rs. 20 and Rs. 50 given by the individual donors increased during the period 1940-1968 nearly thrice from that of the period 1914-1939. The gifts worth between Rs. 51 = 100 and Rs. 101 = 200 are also higher during that period. Members of the Mysore royal family have contributed *Parchi* articles of the assorted categories from Rs. 20 to Rs. 1,000 and their contributions for 1940-1968 is very large when compared to the previous period of 1914-1939. There are contributions from the royal families such as Maharajas of Travancore, Ramanatha, Yuvarajas of Dharmapuri and Kashmir, and from members of Bharatpur royal family. Pontiffs of the Sringeri and Badri Shankaracharya Maths, and the Virasaiva Math at Sivaganga have also donated *Parchi* articles. It is important to note that a tea planter of Assam has been donating valuable *Parchi* articles since 1958. The Boyi caste has also given a *Parchi* article valued between Rs. 101 and Rs. 200.

Gifts in the form of jewellery, gold, and silver articles were given by the members of the Mysore royal family. The worth of jewellery, gold and silver articles by them were Rs. 12,000, Rs. 28,000 and Rs. 13,000 during 1914-1939 and Rs. 4,500, Rs. 4,800 and Rs. 59,800 during 1940-1968 respectively besides those articles for which no valuation was made. During the period from 1940-1968, the gifts in silver were huge as the Maharaja Sri Jaya Chamarajendra Wodeyar had donated an artistically carved silver cover for the entrance door (*mahadwar*) worth more than Rs. 45,000. Contributions were also received from many other Indian royal families, viz. Maharajas of Venkatagiri, Gadwalu, Travancore, Gondal, and Maharanis of Dharmapuri, and Orchha (Pochchu State). There was also a gift from the Pontiff of the Shankaracharya of Sringeri *Math* in the form of gold articles during 1914-1939 which valued Rs. 1,000.

It has been the practice of the devotees to give cash gifts to the temple in the name of the deity for perpetuation and observation of certain rituals fixed in the ritual schedule for earning religious merit, and also earning the blessings of the deity. Such cash gifts are known as permanent endowments and are not refundable. It may be also noted here that in the event of death of an endowment donor, ritual services are done to propitiate his soul. The cash endowments are deposited with the Government and the temple authorities are only concerned

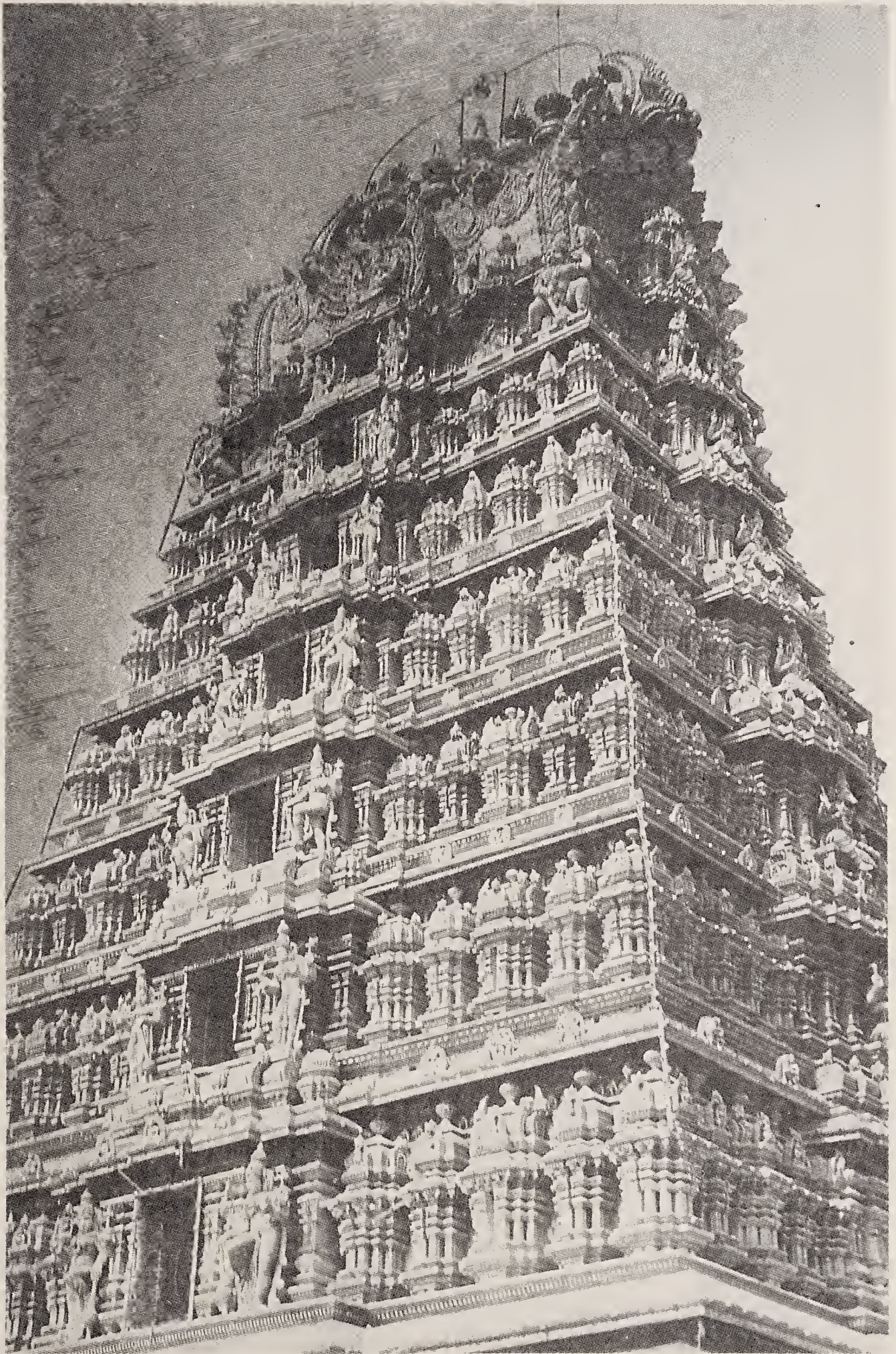
with the interest accrued thereon. The interest amount is utilised for the particular sacred performances desired by donors. The donors have to indicate the different ritual services to be observed in the temple at the time of proposing their endowments. There is a scheme to deposit cash contributions in banks and societies in the name of the temple by devotees. The interest on the deposits are drawn by the temple authorities for performing ritual services as proposed by the depositor-donors.

According to the records available, we may note that members of the Mysore royal family are the largest single patrons whose cash endowments amount to Rs 1,36,682. There are nearly fortyone individual donors and thirtytwo deposit-donors who have contributed total endowments and deposits worth Rs 10,630 and Rs 7,790, respectively. Members of a tea planter family of Assam have given a cash endowment of Rs 300, and deposit donation of Rs 15,708. It may be pointed out here that it was not possible to identify the castes of donors of endowments and deposit.

Previously, the temple had no land endowments. But in 1959 and 1960 the Maharaja and Maharani of Mysore endowed lands worth around 137 acres for the performance of certain ritual services, such as reposing ceremony (*sayanotsava*), keeping ever burning lamps (*nanda deepa*) by using ghee, etc. Provision was also made for feeding of Brahmin devotees on the day of Car festival, and so on. When patronage in the form of endowments and deposits are bestowed by devotees, the latter expect in turn certain ritual services to be made either in their or their nominees, names. Ritual services known as 'seva' are performed for one's health, wealth and prosperity. There are a number of ritual services performed in the temple which are described below.

RITUAL SERVICES (SEVA)

The ritual services include observance of such sacred performances as worshipping with *kumkum* (vermilion *crocus sativus*) and *bilwa* (aegle marmelos) leaves, *Ekadasawara* and *Ekawara Rudra Abhishek*, that is, giving sacred bath to the deity eleven times and one time, respectively. There are other ritual services like *Sahasranama*, *Trisati* and *Astotter* with Kumkum or Bilwa leaves, which require chanting of the name of the deity for one thousand, three hundred, and one hundred and eight times, respectively. There are *vahana* and *Kaitolutsava* Seva. In the former case, *utsava murti* of the deity is taken out on such *vahana* carts as lion, horse, elephant, etc., for circumambulation outside the temple, and in the latter case the deity seated on a palanquin is taken on the shoulders by the Sripada functionaries for circumambulation. During the performances of *Ekadaswara*, *Ekawara*, *Vahana*, and *Kaitolutsava* Seva, some specially cooked food offerings are made to the deity. The *prasada* including the cooked food are given to the devotees for whom such ritual services are performed. But if the devotees are living outside Mysore, only the vermilion



Tower (Gopura) - Renovated

prasada are sent to their address by post. The rates of each ritual service differ. These are fixed according to the expenses involved in each case and nature of the sacred performances. For example the rate for the simple ritual services of *astotter* is fifty paise, and for the *trisati* and *sahasranama* are rupee one and fifty paise, and rupees three, respectively. For the elaborate ritual services which require some expenses for food, etc., like the Ekadasawara and Simha Vahana *utsava*, the rates are rupees twentyfive for each *seva*. There are also Ekawara and Kaitolutsava *sevas* which involve comparatively less expenses, and the rates for these are fixed as rupees ten for each ritual service. These rates were fixed in 1953. Though it is beyond the reach of common devotees to arrange for the costly *sevas*, but many are found to take advantage of the relatively cheaper ritual services like *astotter*, *trisati*, and *sahasranama*. The records on the performance of the *seva* show that the number of ritual services is increasing day by day, and year to year.

Among the *seva*, the most important one is the One Crore Sahasranamarchana (*koti archana*). It takes months together to perform the one crore sahasranama worship. This is a very expensive *seva* involving expenditure on *pooja* articles, food offerings, and payments to Brahmin specialists, etc. Usually, such *seva* is arranged by the Maharaja of Mysore.

It may be noted here that such *seva* by members of the Mysore royal family, and by individual devotees helps the Brahmin specialists, and also the temple, economically. Among the Brahmin, mainly, the priests, assistants, and chanters are the recipients of fixed cash contributions when a ritual service is performed. Sripada functionaries receive cash contribution when *utsava* (*vahana* or *kaitolutsava*) *seva* are held. The temple, on the other hand, also receives cash contributions for each *seva* which are credited to the temple fund. The ritual services are, therefore, an important source of income to the Brahmin specialists and also to the temple. The remuneration to the Brahmin specialists in the form of monthly emoluments are less, but now due to the increasing number of *seva* and other sacred performances, some of the Brahmin specialists have been able to earn money which was not possible in the past.

It is said that the Brahmin functionaries of the temple used to receive cooked rice in good quantity previously. But when their remuneration was revised in 1922, they were said to have opted for increased cash payment instead of the cooked rice, as, then, the money had higher value. Among the Brahmin, many persons of the older generation are dependent upon the temple service alone. The priests and assistant priests are continuing the hereditary profession. Due to increase in pilgrim traffic, functionaries from these two categories are benefitted in earning more cash gifts, and cash contributions from the *seva*. The Sahasranama specialist is receiving nearly twentyfive paise for each sahasranama *seva*, and since such *seva* are arranged by devotees in large number, it is said that

he earns more than rupees two hundred per month. Though he is a Matriculate, he has taken to the traditional occupation on account of the economic gains. But in case of other Brahmin functionaries, it appears that there are not many avenues by way of income, other than seeking cash gifts from devotees by giving *teertha*, etc. as we have already described. Hence many Brahmin specialists, Chanters and Sripada functionaries have been found to be leaving their traditional sacred services in the temple, and seeking jobs outside the hills.

OTHER NON-BRAHMIN FUNCTIONARIES

There are several non-Brahmin functionaries other than the Sivarchaka in the hills. It was not possible to know whether they were there when the Sivarchaka were in the priestly service in the temple. Yet our inference is that the Raja Parivara caste had close association with the worship of Chamundesvari and Uttanahalli deity, as we have noted in the Kanna Kannadi observances of the deities. When Agamik rituals were introduced, several offices like the musicians, torch-bearers, *Tafe* (dancers), *Gumbarti* (carrier of the sacred pot-lamp), etc. seem to have been created. The list of these functionaries was prepared in 1899, on the basis of the previous list prepared in 1851. A few observations are made on them.

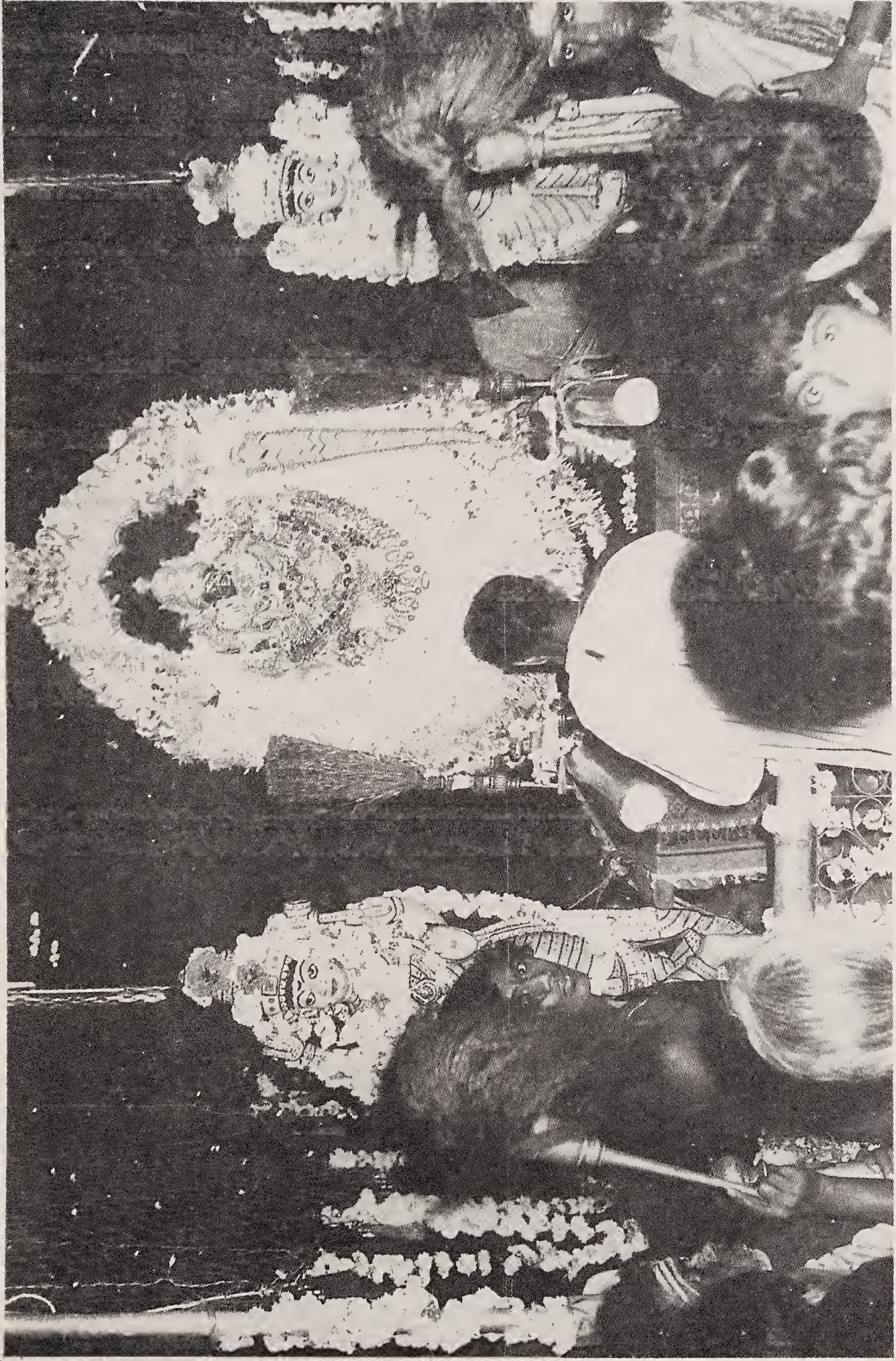
FUNCTIONS OF TEMPLE SERVANTS

The services of certain functionaries are required at the time of Mahamangalarati, during circumambulation of the *utsava* deities, and also when the *utsava* deities are taken to the sacred ponds, and trees. Formerly, women functionaries of the *tafe* and *Gumbarti* used to offer their services at the time of daily sacred performances, but in 1899, an order was passed to the effect that the office of the *Tafe* be discontinued, and the office of the *Gumbarti* be replaced by a male functionary, after these offices fell vacant. Now the latter office alone is continued and is held by a male functionary.

It is necessary that the instrumental music, especially the pipe (*mohari*), or drum (*dholu*), requires technical (*sastraic*) knowledge. Different musical notations are used at the time of performing different rituals. The skill of musicians is stated to be partly inherited and partly learnt from teachers in the respective fields outside the hills. There are several offices of musicians who have to do their respective functions. There are two offices of the piper, which are held by one person as there was none to take up the office when it fell vacant. Two men perform the function of *Sruti* (another kind of pipe). They are holding their offices hereditarily. There are other functionaries such as one each for *tamate* (small drum), *dholu* (big drum), *davane tuthuri* (kettle-drum and trumpet), *kaitala-tutturi* (cymbal and trumpet), *binnanagale* (large trumpet), and *jagate* (gong), who are holding their offices hereditarily. The services of these musicians are essential during the sacred performances of the temple. There are



Instrumental Music



Chamundesvari *Utsava* murti

also two offices of *tipari* (a kind of musical instrument), and *madle* (tabor), but as none was available knowing the technical skill, the offices have fallen vacant since several years. All the functionaries rendering musical services in the temple belong to the Raja Parivara caste.

People of the Raja Parivara caste say that they were the people of Nayaka (hunter) caste, but due to certain reasons they have taken the name of Raja Parivara. The literal meaning of the term indicates that they were members of a royal family. According to one version they were said to belong to the stock of the former *Palegar* (feudal chieftain) Mara Nayaka, who was later defeated by the founder of the present Wodeyar dynasty of Mysore Kings. Another version tells us that, as many persons of the caste were in the services of the Mysore royal family, and as the term *Nayaka* denotes a derogatory sense of hunters, they had started to use the epithet of 'Raja Parivara'.

It is important to note that the Raja Parivara musicians provide services only to the temple, and not to anyone else. About fifty years ago, the musicians of the temple provided their services to the Diksit Brahmin of the hills during auspicious occasions like marriage etc. But as the Raja Parivara of Mysore city considered the practice as derogatory, the musicians stopped the traditional practice. Consequently, it had resulted in the discontinuance of the traditional practice of officiating at the time of marriage and other occasions of the Raja Parivara by the Diksit. Later, the dispute was resolved by the mediation of other Brahmin and Sivarchaka functionaries of the temple, and the decision was in favour of the Raja Parivara musicians. The Diksit had realised the significance of the services of the musicians being dedicated solely to the service of the deity, and hence they had conceded the point of view of the musicians. They have been since then serving the Raja Parivara musicians according to the practice which was prevalent earlier.

There is an office of the conch blower (*sanka*) which is held by a man of the Okkaliga caste. There are three offices of torch-bearer (*masal*) whose function is to hold torch in front of all ceremonial occasions when *utsava* murti are taken out for the ceremonial processions. Out of the three offices of torch-bearer, two are held by the persons of Raja Parivara, and one by a man of Kuruba caste, all of them are held hereditarily. There are eight offices of the menial servants (*talavara*) whose services are utilised for the miscellaneous work. All of them are of Raja Parivara caste, and they have been holding their offices hereditarily. There is a washerman (*agasa*) functionary whose function is to spread the washed clothes at the time of the Kanna Kannadi ritual of the deity. Besides, he also performs the duties of washing curtains and other clothes of the temple. The washerman is a resident of Uttanahalli village. His office too is hereditary. A man of Raja Parivara caste functions as a *Bandikara* whose task is to maintain the Car (*rath*) during the time of the Car festival.

There is a stores assistant (*jinsi golla*), and a helper in cash transactions (*nagadi golla*), who assist the administrative personnel of the temple in the maintenance of stores, sealing the cash box etc. Both the offices are held by persons of the *Golla* (cow heard) caste hereditarily. The office of the Gumbarti, although it has lost its original ritual significance, is held by the Nagadi Golla himself. There is an office of the lamp lighter (*deepa*) which is held hereditarily by a man of the Kuruba caste. The Maramma (village goddess) shrine is guarded by a person of the Raja Parivara caste who is holding the office hereditarily. There are two women functionaries of the Raja Parivara caste doing the service of the sweeper inside the temple. The offices of the sweeper are inherited by the elder daughters-in-law of the concerned families. The office of the sweeper outside the temple, is held by a man of the scheduled (Telugu speaking Adi Jambava) caste hereditarily.

The Raja Parivara numerically dominate among the non-Brahmin functionaries. The Chamundi Betta village too has the numerical dominance of the Raja Parivara. Formerly, people of this caste, in the hills, were dependent mostly upon the temple service, but due to the fragmentation of families, and relatively few avenues for employment in the hills, many persons of this caste have taken to variety of occupations in Mysore city.

These non-Brahmin functionaries in the temple are getting a monthly remuneration varying between seventyfive paise to rupees six. They are also getting remuneration in kind. It may be pointed out here that when Brahmin functionaries had opted for higher remuneration in 1922 as said earlier, they had sought for the retention of remuneration both in cash and kind. Due to this combination, they are getting grain in good quantity which has helped them considerably. Some of the Raja Parivara have also combined with the temple service, other lucrative trades like selling green coconut, cucumber fruits etc. Women of the families of the Raja Parivara functionaries have taken to the trade of selling *pooja* particles to devotees at the premises of the temple. Because of the large number of pilgrims visiting the hills for the purpose of religious observances, and cultural sight-seeing, the concerned persons make brisk trade in these business which has helped them in the improvement of their economic conditions considerably. However, women traders in *pooja* articles emphasise that they are not much concerned with the economic aspect involved in the trade (though usually their articles cost more), but that they have to do their duty of serving the devotees at the feet of the great mother goddess (*mahatayi*).

Though there are a few difficulties like the low remuneration for the temple service, many of these temple servants are happy to perform their traditional occupation. Their services become necessary in the context of the increased number of various ritual performances of the temple.



Kanna Kannadi deity on the head of a girl in procession

NON-BRAHMIN TRADITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE TEMPLE

As part of Agamic ritual traditions, Car and Boat festivals are observed to propitiate the Chamundesvari deity. These festivals are observed after the Dussehra festivities are over. These annual festivals attract large number of devotees from Mysore city, and neighbouring villages

(a) *Incense burning*: There are some specialists who are found to be functioning as incense burners (*dhoopadavaru*) at the time of the annual festivals. Large number of the functionaries who mostly come from the villages in Nanjangud taluk at the time of these festivals, arrange the sacred service of incense burning by the non-Brahmin devotees. They belong to the castes of Uppaliga (salt makers) and Raja Parivara. We have observed that women dominate among these functionaries. They keep an earthen burner in which the devotees burn forest incense (*sambrani*) in the name of the deity. The incense is provided to devotees by the functionaries. For this service, they are paid by the devotees. The incense burners occupy the places near the entrance gate of the temple, and also at the important places on the foothills. It has been observed that mostly non-Brahmin devotees do the performance. The incense burners are stated to be following this job as a traditional profession of their family. It was observed that services rendered by these functionaries are mooted on the economic ground, but, for the devotees, burning of incense at the sacred place of the deity on the solemn occasion, is a sacred observance. Some devotees are found to make vows to the deity that they would burn the incense during the annual festivals in the event of cure of diseases etc. and such vowers do the service again. Since the service of incense burning does not cost more than three to five paise, large number of devotees are found to observe it. This function appears to be a non-Brahminic ritual tradition, and is a feature of the local folk culture.

(b) *Sivarchaka mobile priests* : On the occasion of the Car festival we observed that nearly thirty Sivarchaka priests from the villages of Golur, Hadya, and Nanjangud town of the Nanjangud taluk had come to the hills for performing the sacred performance. Most of them, though not the kin of the Sivarchaka of the hills, are found to be doing the function traditionally. It may be noted that no Sivarchaka from the hills does the function. As the *utsava* murti is enshrined in the Car before it is drawn, and also the *utsava* murti is kept there until the evening of the day of the Car festival, these Sivarchaka priests conveniently do the sacred performance. As soon as the Car is brought to a halt near the temple, and Brahmin functionaries and other officials of the palace leave the place, the Sivarchaka occupy the Car, on its body, wheels etc., and start the worship. Their form of worship is that they receive *pooja* articles from the devotees. Then coconuts are broken, plantains are peeled off, and sandal sticks and camphor are burnt. They make the gesture of showing the offerings to the

utsava murti when it is in the Car, or towards the direction of the deity in the temple when it is not in the Car. They then place some quantity of vermillion, in the broken coconuts together with flowers, and return all the *pooja* articles to the concerned devotees as a consecrated *prasada*. For the sacred performance that are done they seek voluntary gifts usually in cash from the devotees. It was found that many a non-Brahmin devotee approaches the Sivarchaka for the ritual. On the day of the Boat festival too, many of the Sivarchaka similarly become the priests of the devotees, though on that day the *utsava* murti is not enshrined in the Car. As a matter of fact many devotees are found to be concerned with the offerings of their *pooja* articles to the deity. They are not at all concerned with whether *utsava* murti is in the Car or not. The main reason for seeking the service of these mobile Sivarchaka, particularly on the day of the Car festival, is that due to the huge crowd, it becomes practically impossible to wait outside the temple in queue for hours together in order to enter the temple, and hence, many of the devotees seek the services of the Sivarchaka priest to worship the deity from outside. Perhaps it is part of traditional culture.

(c) *Coconut collecting* : Devotees have a system of offering full coconuts (*idigai*) by hitting on the ground. On the day of the Car festival, we observed that large number of devotees offer coconuts in this manner, as a part of the ritual performance. But the significant point here is that the large number of coconuts broken are collected systematically by the people of Ketamanahalli, a suburb of Mysore city. People of the village claim that it was their traditional right to collect them for the traditional service of drawing the Car which they are privileged to do, at the time of the festival.

According to the arrangement, we were told that one man from each family, irrespective of caste, from the village has to assemble at the hills. Two groups consisting of about five to six persons attend to the function of collecting broken coconuts, and the remaining attend to the function of drawing the Car. As soon as the sacred performances to the *utsava* murti enshrined in the Car are over, the Maharaja of Mysore is said to draw the Car accompanied by the officials of the palace, for a few paces to mark the start of the ritual. Then the villagers of Ketamanahalli draw the car for a full round as is the traditional practice.

The two batches attending to the function of collecting the broken coconuts do their services from dawn to dusk on the day of the Car festival as the large number of devotees mostly perform the said ritual at this time only. One batch attends to the performance at the first step on the footsteps-way at the foothills leading to the temple, and the other batch does the function near the entrance gate. These are the only two places where the ritual is performed by the devotees. The broken coconuts collected on the day by both the batches are said



Guarding the Temple - Non-Brahmin
Sivarchaka Functionaries

to be distributed to every family in the village as *prasada*. Members of the untouchable castes of the village also participate in the function, and they are also given the coconut *prasada*.

On the day of the Boat festival also, it was observed that some villagers from Ramanahalli, Sakkalli, Minnur, Uttanahalli, Alanahalli, and Vajamangal villages situated a few miles away from the hills are also collecting broken coconuts. But in this case it is rather done more on individual basis than any organised way. It is said that only villagers from the villages mentioned above are doing the function of collecting coconuts on that day. There is no reciprocal obligation on the part of those villagers to do any function as with coconut collectors of Ketamanahalli village. The only significant point here is that the people from the villages are gradually traditionalising the function by regularly visiting the temple every year on the ceremonial occasion.

To sum up, the super-imposition of the Brahminic tradition on the local non-Brahmin tradition due to historical, political, and cultural reasons, has brought about certain organisational changes and of adaptability among the sacred specialists of both the categories in propagating and spreading the religious belief of the Chamundesvari deity in the larger cultural areas. The traditions associated with the annual festivals of the temple like the incense burning, Sivarchaka officiating as mobile priests and collection of coconuts, are the warfs and woofs of the network of the temple organisation, by and through which various categories of people are brought into the Chamundesvari worship-fold.

CHAPTER THREE

WORSHIP OF THE CHAMUNDESVARI DEITY

In this chapter we shall discuss some more pertinent questions, such as : Who are the devotees of Chamundesvari deity of Mysore ? What are their motives for visiting the temple, and how do they comprehend the deity ? How intensively the festivals arranged in the name of the deity touch the various castes and communities of Mysore ?

To elicit information on these queries we kept a close watch on the important ritual activities of the temple and the devotees visiting the temple. Some of the devotees were interviewed and the data on their motives, modes of visiting the temple and its frequency, caste background, the place from which they come, etc., have been collected. We then made a survey of the Mysore city and the surrounding villages to find out the nature of association the people have developed with the temple in course of time.

The data are presented here in three sections. In the first section, description on the devotees visiting the temple and whom we contacted is given, in the second and third sections, the nature and understanding of the Chamundesvari deity and the sacred performances associated with the deity, by the people on the surrounding villages, and of Mysore city, respectively, are described.

DEVOTEES VISITING THE TEMPLE

It is said that previously devotees largely visited the temple during the annual Car and Boat festivals held after the Dasara festivities, but for about fifteen years, there has been onrush of devotees and tourists to the Chamundesvari temple all the year round. The number of devotees has been increasing year by year due to the improved transport facilities. From many important cities and towns in the southern states, luxury and tourist buses ply to bring large number of tourists to Mysore including the Chamundi hills. Though generally tourists visit the hills for the purpose of cultural sight-seeing, the Hindu tourists show great reverence to the Chamundesvari deity, and offer their prayers. Pooja articles are bought at the shop in the hills, and offered to the officials at the temple for worship. Devotees in return receive and carry back the consecrated vermilion and pooja articles as Prasada. Orthodox Hindu visitors are found to buy the photoprint copies of the deity at the hills from the mobile traders who sell them alongwith other picturepost booklets of tourist interest.

The usual mode of communication to the temple is chiefly by walk, or bicycle, scooter, Government bus, luxury tourist bus, or private taxi. As said earlier, there is a thousand stairs way by which devotees can go on foot. At the beginning of our fieldwork we contacted visitors at random for a period of seven

days. The number of visitors contacted during this period, excluding children, was 437, among whom men numbered 290 and women 147. It is interesting to note that among them, there were a few visitors of other religions, that is Muslim (5 persons) and Christian (4 persons) whose main interest in visiting the Chamundi hills was sight-seeing. Muslim and Christian visitors were from the places outside the Mysore city.

While among the Hindu visitors, whom we contacted, there were a few visitors from such states as Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Kerala, Madras and Maharashtra, a few were from the various districts of (former) Mysore State, but the bulk of them was from the city of Mysore. Among the visitors from Mysore city, nearly 25 percent came to the temple on foot. There were two sadhus who had reached the temple by walk. One sadhu belonged to the Dasanami sect of the Rishikesh Shankaracharya Math, who visited the temple on his pilgrimage to different places in India. Another sadhu, an Andhraite, stated that he had renounced the pleasures of the world to become an ascetic of the Dasanami sect. He has been touring different places in South India, and will later go to Rishikesh to meet his guru (religious preceptor) there.

PURPOSE OF WORSHIP

Among the visitors whom we contacted many had gone to the hills with the twin purpose of devotion and cultural sight-seeing. But we also met a few devotees with specific purpose of worship. These specific purposes included : (1) buying of a new car, (2) offering of unshaved hair (*mudi*) vowed to the Nanjundesvar deity at Nanjangud at the shrine of the Nanjundesvar and visiting the temple on return, as is the usual practice on such occasions, (3) auspicious occasions after marriage or birth of a child in the house, (4) offering of replica of silver eyes to the deity, when a devotee earlier suffering from eye troubles was cured with the blessings of the deity, and (5) offering of *mudi* to the deity as fulfilment of a vow made to the deity.

In the case of buying a car, it may be noted that the devotees had arranged worship to the vehicle by the Sivarchaka priest and also had arranged for the worship of the deity. In the other three cases, devotees had arranged for the worship to the deity, but in case of the last one, that is offering of *mudi*, the devotee had arranged for the sacrifice of an animal. Since such a case came to our notice, it is described here in contrast to the usual form of worship of offering pooja articles.

A devotee of the Boyi caste from a village in Shimoga district visited the temple to fulfil the vow of offering the *mudi* of his child. The practice of giving *mudi* to the deity in his family had been started by his father, as the latter had begot a child (the devotee) by the blessings of the deity. The devotee, therefore, had been continuing the practice whenever he got a child each time. This time, he had gone to the hills to perform the *mudi*-giving ceremony of his third child.

He had arranged for the shaving of the *mud* of the child near the Devi Kere (pond where rituals to the deity are observed) by a barber of a neighbouring village. Everyone had taken bath in the pond. He arranged for the worship at the temple by giving pooja articles, and also a ritual service of kumkum astotter to the deity. After this had been done, a he-goat was given to the Bandikar functionary. The latter brought the animal just in front of the main entrance and cut the throat and a leg of the animal, and the leg was inserted in the mouth of the sacrificed animal, as is done on such rite. Concerned devotees applied with their finger tips the blood of the animal to their forehead. It is said that later the devotees cooked the meat of the animal and ate it. It may, however, be noted that generally animal sacrifices are done near the foothills, but such instances as the one described above are very rare.

ATTENDANCE OF DEVOTEES ON FESTIVE OCCASIONS

During the annual Car and Boat festivals the people at the Chamundi Betta village receive devotee-guests in their homes. For instance, we observed that in one Sivarchaka's house, there were about fifteen guests from the neighbouring villages. The Brahmin too had a number of guests in their houses. There is a choultry of a Vaisya devotee in the hills which was also filled with Vaisya devotees on those days. Some Raja Parivara functionaries said that some of their kin and friends from the neighbouring villages and Mysore city had come to them to stay for the occasions. The devotees from different parts of Mysore city gather in large number on these occasions. The special buses arranged by the government and private undertakings and special trains from neighbouring places to Mysore city bring devotees from different parts to witness the Car and Boat festivals. The participation of the Maharaja of Mysore in the ritual activities of the deities, such as drawing the Car of the deity for a few yards, and his witnessing the colourful Boat ceremony are additional attractions to the devotees and tourists.

These factors have been responsible for the extension and spread of the religious content of the Chamundesvari belief, and they have made the temple come to be known in larger areas. Also the tourists and devotees of the Chamundesvari, who pay their visits daily or on annual festivals to offer their prayers, become the agents to spread the belief of the deity, when they go back to their respective places, specially through carrying back the Prasada, photo of the deity, etc.

WORSHIP OF THE CHAMUNDESVARI DEITY IN THE RURAL HINTERLAND

For the purpose of understanding the nature and spread of cultural traditions of the Chamundesvari worship in the immediate hinterland, we undertook a survey of twenty villages which surround the hills. These villages, by deliberate choice, were so chosen that they encompass the hills and Mysore city. This was



When the Temple doors open!

considered a necessity for the purpose of our study, and with a view to describing certain points raised by us in the beginning. The following is the brief description on the precise nature of worship and understanding of the deity in the villages surveyed by us.

We visited twenty villages in all, and contacted important personalities like the village headman, panchayat members, and also a few elderly persons. The information was in the nature of discussion on the worship of the Chamundesvari deity.

We found that a few castes had their numerical dominance in a few villages situated in a certain geographical area. Out of the twenty villages, the general pattern of distribution of numerically dominant castes in villages is : (1) Okkaliga are distributed in six villages in north and north-west, (2) Lingayat have their distribution in five villages lying south-east and north-east, (3) Raja Parivara in one village in the north. But there are other castes too which are numerically dominant in a few villages. For instance, the Adikarnataka (untouchable caste) are distributed in four villages and the Kuruba (shepherd) in three villages, but all in different directions. The Waddar (stone workers) live as a numerically dominant caste in a village situated south-west of the hills.

COMPREHENSION OF THE DEITY

Our informants in the villages comprehend the Chamundesvari deity as the incarnation of Parvati, consort of Siva who was born to protect mankind from evil-doers. Some of them stated that as Parvati was the family deity of Maharaja of Mysore, she was revered. The idea that the deity was the killer of the Mahisha demon, and she is a great mother goddess guiding the destiny of the people was also prevalent among the villagers. While most of them gave their comprehension as described above, there were a few Adikarnataka informants who said that they did not know who the deity was.

With regard to the patron families of the Chamundesvari deity we found that out of twenty villages, in only two villages there are patron families of the deity. The patron families belong to the castes of Okkaliga, Sivarchaka, Achari, Vaisya, Raja Parivara, Waddar, Adikarnataka and also Lingayat. Among these castes, it may be noted that the Okkaliga have the largest number of patron families.

PATRON FAMILIES

As we have described in Chapter III, the patron families have close links with the non-Brahmin sacred specialists, viz. Sivarchaka. In our enquiry in the twenty villages we came to know that only in two villages the Sivarchaka specialists of the Chamundi hills are associated with the patron families. In one village the information was that a few years ago a Sivarchaka priest from the Chamundi hills used to visit the village, but since ten years, he has stopped

visiting. The reasons for the discontinuance of the service to the patron families in the village were not known to the informants. In another village, the Okkaliga patron families seek the services of a Sivarchaka priest from the hills and also from a Okkaliga priest of the Kurubarhalli village situated near the foothills, at the time of the great festival (dodda habba) of the Chamundesvari deity held at the interval of three or four years, or during the marriage of the eldest son in the family.

OBSERVANCE OF CHAMUNDESVARI FESTIVAL

We have noted that the Chamundesvari festivals in the villages are observed in two ways. Those who are patron families of the deity observe festivals once in several years depending upon their convenience, or definitely observing at the time of marriage, or opening ceremony ritual of a newly built house, etc. This type of festival is called 'Dodda Habba' (Great festival). The other type of festival which is known as 'Chamundesvari Habba' (festival in honour of the Chamundesvari deity) is a community festival. These two types of festivals are described here showing their salient features and variations.

Dodda Habba : Patron families of three villages are found to be observing the Dodda habba, with some variations in the performances in each case. We are describing the performances in the three villages here as three separate cases.

CASE I : In this village which is situated about six miles away from the Chamundi hills, there are twenty patron families of the Okkaliga caste. On occasions like the marriage in a patron's house the Dodda Habba is arranged, when kith and kin are invited. A proper place is arranged in the house of the patron for enshrining the deity. Usually, near a streamlet in the village, a Kalasa (a metallised vessel) symbolising the deity is consecrated. The concerned Sivarchaka priest of the Chamundi hills is invited to officiate on such occasions with the Gaddige deity. The Kalasa is consecrated with flowers of arecanut tree, betel leaves, and coconut. Though it was the practice that a Sivarchaka priest of the hills used to officiate during the ceremony, it is stated that since twentyfive years or so, no one is going to the village for the function. Therefore, one of the elderly Okkaliga is asked to officiate. When the Kalasa is consecrated, it is brought to the house of the patron, where it is enshrined. From this place, the Kalasa deity is taken out round the village in a procession accompanied by the music of the village servants of the untouchable castes, and also of those who are hired from the city of Mysore. The Kalasa is carried on the head by such unmarried girls who have not attained puberty. This particular ceremony is called in the village as Kanna Kannadi. When the Kalasa is brought back to the house, he-goats are sacrificed. Other devotees of the village who are not patrons, may offer pooja articles to the Kalasa deity. A feast is arranged as part of the ritual celebrations when meat of the sacrificed animals is also served. This marks the completion of the ceremony. This is the usual manner of observance



Chandi Homa - Preparation



Chandi Homa - Ghee Oblations - For Welfare of people

of the festival in the village. But there is also an interesting case of a patron family, whose members, significantly enough, propitiate the Chamundesvari deity in a different manner, which deserves mention.

Headman and members of a family in the village who are patrons to the deity have not been observing the Dodda Habba in their house since twentyfive years. They have instead, resorted to visiting the Chamundesvari temple at the hills itself. They said that they arrange at the temple ritual services like *kumkum sahasranama*, *rudra abhishek*, and so on of the ritual schedule of the temple. They also present articles, usually of cloth (Parchi) whenever vows are made. They put their cash gifts in the Golak of the temple. They carry back to their village the food and other Prasada and also the *teertha* of the deity. They distribute the Prasada among devotees of the deity who ask for it.

It is said that due to this new manner of worship of the deity, members of this particular family have taken to strict vegetarianism. This change in their way of life has been brought about by the grandfather of the informant since about twentyfive years. It may be noted here that the grandfather was said to be a great devotee of the deity. He himself wrote a few songs on the great deeds of the deity based on Devimahatme which he sang during the *Yaksagana* (folk drama) performances in his village, and also in other places. Though he is dead, women members of his family still sing those songs with great devotion. The man had also enshrined a permanent Kalasa at his house which is worshipped on Fridays regularly. Members of the family observe one time fast on the day of the Car festival of the deity. As far as possible, elderly members of this family have been trying to spread the belief of the deity and always emphasise that vegetarianism is a sign of good behaviour. They say that sacrificing the animals to the deity is not a good custom.

CASE 2 : In this village, the patron families observe the Dodda Habba usually once in three years, and in a large scale at the time of the marriage of eldest son. Alongwith the Sivarchaka priest of the hills, an Okkaliga priest of Kurubarhalli is also invited. The consecration ceremony of the Kalasa is done by the Sivarchaka priest, and if he is not present, then the Okkaliga priest may do the performance. In this village, the Okkaliga priest has the traditional clientele of the families. The priest also officiates during marriage in a patron's family. The festival is observed the same way as described in Case 1.

CASE 3 : There are fifty patron families of Okkaliga caste in this village. They usually observe the festival as fulfilment of vows made by them to the Chamundesvari deity. Since the festival is observed by a few patron families, they mutually cooperate for performing the ceremony. The concerned families go to the foothills of the temple, and observe the ritual. A pandal is built near the foothills. The Kalasa is decorated in the same way as has been described in Case 1. One of the Okkaliga officiates as the priest on the occasion. Before the

worship of the Kalasa, a few persons go to the temple at the hills, arrange for a *kumkum astotter* worship to the deity. They bring back the Prasada and *Teertha* of the deity. *Teertha* is put in the Kalasa, which then becomes the symbolic of Chamundesvari deity. Pooja articles by members of the patron families (mainly male members assembled) are offered to the Kalasa deity. Animals are sacrificed. Ceremonial food is cooked and eaten by the members. Then as part of the Visarjana ceremony, it is stated that the contents of the Kalasa are dropped in a pond. The Prasada, and the *Teertha* of the Chamundesvari and the Prasada of the Kalasa deity like broken coconut, etc., are carried back to their village.

Chamundesvari Habba : In twelve, out of the twenty villages surveyed by us we have noted that the Chamundesvari festival is observed by the whole village community. In the remaining eight villages, the festival used to be held in one village several years ago, but the observance is said to have been discontinued due to the lack of leadership in that village and in the remaining seven villages, the festival was not observed at all.

We gathered that there are certain local variations in the performances of the Chamundesvari Habba in villages where the local community participates in its observance. In five villages the festival is celebrated in almost the same way. The village community festival is observed in the following manner.

The observance of the Chamundesvari festival is held once a year in a village. When elders of the village decide to observe the festival, they fix the time and date of the festival, which is communicated to the villages by the untouchable servants of the village by beating drum, and announcing the decision. Contributions from each household are collected. Such contributions are voluntary. Usually, the festival is held on a Friday or Tuesday. A pandal is built outside the village settlement, generally near a water source. It may be noted that a man of the dominant caste officiates on such occasion. A Kalasa is enshrined in the pandal. Women of the village offer pooja articles, and also Tambittu (made of rice flour and jaggery) to the deity. These are consecrated by the officiating priest, and returned to the devotees as Prasada. He-goats are sacrificed. Usually, one he-goat is sacrificed at the expense of the village community in front of the Kalasa deity. But individual families forming into groups also sacrifice animals and fowls, privately, at their own costs. The meat of the animal, sacrificed by the village community, is usually given to the village servants. The visarjana ceremony is held by dropping the contents of the Kalasa in water. The object of the observance of the festival is that the Chamundesvari is propitiated in order to ward off the evil of cholera and other diseases.

In the other seven villages, we noted a few variations in the observance of the community festival, though the traditional practice is same as described above. In one village, for instance, the priest who officiates on the ritual occasion is a

Lingayat priest of the Siva temple in the village. But he will not be present at the time of animal sacrifice. In another village, the Kalasa is consecrated with the *teertha* brought from the Chamundesvari temple at the hills. In three villages, it is said, Kalasa is not made. But there, five stones are enshrined in the pandal to represent the Chamundesvari deity. Out of these three villages, in case of one village, the *teertha* is brought from the Chamundesvari temple; and in the case of the Uttanahalli village, the *teertha* of the Uttanahalli amma temple is brought at the time of the performance. In the latter case, Lingayat priest of the Uttanahalli temple officiates.

Not only Kalasa and stone symbolise the Chamundesvari deity in villages, but image worship too is made. For example, in one village, we were told that an image of mud the deity is made and enshrined in the pandal built for the purpose. On such ritual occasion in this village, food offerings are made by individual families, but significantly, the food offerings are not brought back to the village; instead, these are deserted on the site itself alongwith the image. But the pooja articles offered to the deity are brought back as Prasada. No visarjana ceremony is held. The reason for the observance in these villages is similar, that is, to propitiate the deity to ward off diseases. It may be noted that in most cases the community festival is held at the village site, but there is a lone exception to it. In one village, we were informed that the villagers observe the festival near the Kibbi Pada at the foothills of the temple. The villagers observe the festival in almost the same way as Dodda Habba is observed as described in Case 3. In this case, it is stated that the purpose of the performance is to propitiate the deity for good rainfall.

NAMING THE CHILDREN

It is the usual practice among the members of the patron families either in villages or in the city that they give the name of the Chamundesvari deity in various forms, to children, usually to the eldest child, such as Chamundi with suffix as 'Appa', or Gouda in case of a male child, and Chamundi with suffix 'Amma', for the female child. Generally, the name of the Chamundesvari deity is not given to those who are not patrons of the deity.

So far we have described the cultural traditions of the sacred performances in the villages surrounding Mysore city and the Chamundi hills. In the following account, our emphasis will be on the various sacred performances associated with the belief of the Chamundesvari deity in the different parts of Mysore city.

WORSHIP OF CHAMUNDESVARI IN MYSORE CITY

Mysore city is divided into seven mohallas or municipal wards. The Hindus predominate in mohallas. The Brahmin are concentrated in various Agrahara located very near to the palace and old city. Castes other than the Brahmin are found mostly in all the mohallas of the Mysore city. These castes like the

Brahmin also show the tendency to live together in a locality. Thus, we found that Ashokapuram and Gandhi Nagar extensions are exclusively dominated by the untouchable castes. In various mohallas we observed areas like Dodda Okkalagiri (residential areas for Okkaliga caste), Kumbaragiri (residential areas for Kumbara potters) etc. The number of homogeneous areas are, however, small. There are other areas in mohallas where the population is heterogeneous, yet the people of these smaller areas have the feeling of oneness. The boundaries of these small areas are very clear to the residents. For all practical purposes these smaller areas—mohallas in a mohalla—are villagelike corporate units.

It has been observed that in all the mohallas excepting the Fort mohalla of the Mysore city, the worship of Chamundesvari alone, or alongwith local deity, is made. But these worships are not made, firstly, with reference to the bigger mohalla; socondly, in the modern extension areas of the city like Jayalakshmipuram or Saraswathipuram; and, thirdly, in the residential areas where the Brahmin, Lingayat, or other vegetarian castes dominate.

The community worship¹ of Chamundesvari in all these mohallas is made in various ways. In some areas, the deity is worshipped once a year exclusively, and in other areas Chamundesvari is worshipped alongwith local deities, as she is considered to be the elder sister of the other female deities. In some places whenever there is a worship of a local deity, Chamundesvari is also worshipped by them, for the worshippers believe that 'Chamundi being the supreme among the deities, she should be worshipped always'.

It has been observed that where the Chamundesvari worship is organised by a caste alone, the frequency is uniform, i.e., once a year. For example, the Okkaliga, the Adikarnataka, the Kumbara perform the worship once a year since its inception. The last named caste has been performing the worship in their locality since last 45 years. The uniformity of the performance was also noted in other cases where a caste worships the deity exclusively on a particular day alongwith their caste deities. There are other areas where the people worship Chamundesvari when a need arises. For instance, if an out break of disease or scarcity is observed, the locality arranges for the worship, and may not repeat it if the crisis is over. In recent years, it has been observed that a few colonies of government employees arranged for the worship of the deity. The motive behind arranging the worship of Chamundesvari in these cases also is to overcome any crisis situation. It has been reported that for such reasons not only all the caste members living in the colony, but also the people of other religions render monetary help.

1. This is in contrast to the individual families paying reverance to the deity by visiting the temple etc., and the form of worship by a community, we may designate as 'community worship of Chamundesvari'. (cf. village community festival).

Chamundesvari being the female deity is worshipped on Tuesdays and Fridays. The date for the annual worship is not fixed as in case of other Sanskritic gods, such as Ganesh. In Mysore city, the dates of Chamundesvari worship is primarily based on the convenience of the people and tradition of the locality. In most localities of the city the deity is worshipped during summer months, but in the Kumbaragiri locality the festival is performed about a fortnight before the commencement of Dussehra. Reason for this deviation lies in the history of the festival itself. It has been narrated that the festival was started by the people of this locality on the advice of an Arasu (Kshatriya) family which was closely associated with the Maharaja of Mysore, to ward off plague which broke out in the area about fifty years ago. Since then the tradition of worshipping the deity is continuing.

In most of the villages, as we have seen, members of the non-Brahmin castes officiate as priests whereas in Mysore city involvement of the Brahmin at various stages of worship has been observed. One Mudaliar contractor has constructed a temple of Chamundesvari. The temple was inaugurated by the Maharaja of Mysore. The plot of land for the temple was donated by two Arasu families. The contractor has appointed a Brahmin as the priest in the temple. It may be noted that Chamundesvari at the Kumbaragiri is worshipped at the local Rama Mandir where a Brahmin performs daily worship. The latter officiates as the priest during the annual festival of Chamundesvari. In another heterogeneous locality, a Brahmin has replaced the traditional priest of non-Brahmin Rachavar caste. Reason for doing so was that the goddess Chamundesvari is worshipped in the local Gangamma temple which is also visited by the Brahmin. As the Brahmin do not take *teertha* from the hands of Rachavar, the temple authorities have opted for this change. In one of the Okkaliga localities, we observed that one of the caste members officiates as the priest, whereas in the same area, in another locality of the caste, a Brahmin does the worship of Chamundesvari. Among an untouchable caste, the annual festival of the deity is celebrated with great pomp in which one of the caste members acts as a priest on the occasion. We have, however, noted that among the Adi Jambava (Kannada Madiga), an untouchable caste, a Brahmin is requested to go near the Karanji Kere² (a pond situated a few furlongs away from the foothills) where he consecrates the Kalasa and leaves the spot. The Kalasa is then brought to their locality for worship.

SYMBOLISED FORMS OF THE DEITY

In Mysore city, Chamundesvari is symbolised in various ways during the worship. The worship of Kalasa is the traditional and folk custom, and the deity

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2. The reference of this pond is made in a folk song, depicting the love story of Chamundesvari and Nanjundesvar of Nanjangud. According to the narration when Chamundesvari was taking bath in the Karanji Kere, keeping off her jewel-studded sari on the bank, Nanjundesvar had gone there, taken out the sari, and had disappeared. Chamundesvari covering her naked body with her long hair ran to her palace at the hills (Ref : 'Odi Bandalu Bettakke' in Kannada, Janapada Sahitya Academy, Mysore, 1965. Third Edition. pp. 70-72).

is worshipped through this symbol. Recently, in some areas this symbol has been reinforced by displaying the photos and idols of the deity. It appears that certain traditions are in formative stage about these symbols. One of the idol-makers (Raju) states that he has been receiving orders for making earthen Chamundesvari idols every year. After completion of the worship these idols are thrown away. Then there are places where idols of the deity made of wood and mud are retained throughout the year. If any locality desires to take an idol for worship during the festival, it is lent. It may be noted that some centres give them free and some on nominal charges (to cover painting charges). For instance, the organisers of the Mysore State Electricity Board Employees Colony had taken the Chamundesvari idol for the worship from Devaraja Mohalla, free of cost. But another mohalla while worshipping Bandamma (a local non-Sanskritic deity) had taken the idol of Chamundesvari on hire from its neighbouring mohalla. When it was enquired as to why they have paid for hiring the idol, the informants told that they are not short of money, and so they do not mind paying the Arasu family, about whom a reference has already been made earlier and who was instrumental in starting the Chamundesvari festival in Kumbharagiri locality, which has maintained wooden idol of the deity. Every year they lend the idol to at least two localities. A cinema owner also keeps an idol of Chamundesvari, which he got made at the time of the release of the Kannada picture entitled *Mahishasura Mardini*. He also lends the idol to different mohallas for worship.

Duration of the annual worship of the deity varies from locality to locality. In most of the areas, the festival is over within twentyfour hours, but in a few others, the festival is extended for a longer period. On such occasions religious functions like Bhajans, Harikatha etc. are organised. Within this wide range of diversity certain practices are ordered. Firstly, in most of the community-Chamundesvari worship, it has been observed that Kalasa (or Kalasas if more than one deity) is worshipped and that is primarily the symbol of Chamundesvari. The traditional way is to worship the Kalasa at the foothills of the Chamundi hills. Teerth (consecrated water) of the deity from the temple is brought. The Kalasa is then brought on the head by an unmarried girl who has not attained puberty. Second important point is the sacrifice of animals at various points of the locality, and at least one animal (known as *dhoolomari*) is sacrificed in front of the deity. During the sacrificial rituals no Brahmin is associated. People of the untouchable caste. Adikarnataka (Holeya), Adijambava (Madiga) of the city are the drummers and announcers, Lastly, after the worship Visrajana (immersion, or throwing away) ceremony of the deity is arranged.

It is interesting for us to discuss the range of variation in the above stated three ordered features. The involvement of the status of the pre-puberty girl in carrying the Kalasa deity is a very significant trait of the folk tradition of this

area. We have already observed that in the Kanna Kannadi festival held on the hills the chief deity is carried by a girl if the pre-puberty status. The Kanna Kannadi festival is considered to be play period of the deity. The present day Car and Boat festivals also carry somewhat the same ideas. Sankaranarayana (1953 : 387) writes, “Devi is also worshipped as Kumari and is mother. As Kumari she is called Bala and Lalita and is conceived as sporting in the universe... which she created as its Sri Mata”. Whether the people of Mysore conceive this notion so clearly is a point for further enquiry, but the tradition has it that when the deity is brought, she is considered to be a small girl, but when she is worshipped at the locality, she is Mother. This feature of bringing the Kalasa from the foothills has been omitted in case of Kumbargari mohalla. But there is a slight variation there. The Brahmin priest goes to Chamundesvari temple at the hills and takes *teertha* of the deity in a vessel. The *teertha* is brought to the Rama Mandir, and the priest Mandir is completed. Due to the close association of Arasu family from the very beginning, and due to presence of Rama Mandir, the Brahmin caste is closely associated with the other rites. For instance, on the day when the deity is installed, four to five Brahmins, other than the priest, are invited for performing Homa(sacrificial ritual), *sahasranama* etc.

As regards the sacrifice of animals is concerned we observed that where the association of the Brahmin with the festival is intimate, the sacrifices are made in the houses of caste members who take vows to do so. It is significant to note that Kumbargiri people offer pumpkin sacrifice near the house of Arasu family from where they bring the idol of deity. But in other areas of the city, animals are sacrificed at important sports in the area, and at the place where the deity is installed. These sacrifices are arranged by the organising committee, as a part of the local tradition, or by the individuals who take vows to do so. In no case the Brahmin play any role in these rites. As regards the Visarjana after the worship it is observed by all. In all the areas of the city of Mysore where the Chamundesvari festival is observed, the sacred water used in the Kalasa for worship is taken from any of the following areas Chamundesvari temple, Chamundi Pada (Kibbi pada), and ponds situated at the foot of Chamundi hills, namely Dodda Kere, Karanji Kere etc. The only Paduvarahalli people who do not worship the Kalasa, It may be added out here that all these spots were renovated or constructed by the rulers of Mysore. In one of the mohallas where Chamundesvari festival is observed by the non-Brahmin caste, a band party is sent from the very old times by the palace authorities to honour the deity.

Chamundesvari festival is observed in mohallas elaborately. We have given the description of the festivals as observed in two mohallas of the city in Appendix B, as two illustrations of the sacred performances. As regards the worship of the deity made by the individual Vokkalu families, the mode of worship and other details are similar to that in the villages.

MOTIVATIONS FOR THE WORSHIP

The popularity of the Chamundesvari festival raises the question of the deity being worshipped as a community deity. To answer this question we have to bear in mind the nature of the people who are living in the city and their understanding and comprehension of the deity.

The names of the mohallas of Mysore are mostly based on either the caste of the inhabitants or their functions or after some important personalities of the Mysore royal family. A large number of people living in these mohallas were variously associated with the Mysore palace. In preceding pages, we have discussed how the Royal family was instrumental in making important changes in the mode of worship in the Chamundesvari temple. Association of the families of the Maharaja with the worship of Chamundesvari is very intimate. The following excerpts from a booklet 'Dasara in Mysore' written by Cousin (1926) shall further elaborate our point :

"On the morning of the first day of the festival, and after the customary daily religious ceremonial, His Highness goes to Chamundi Thotti, the department which looks after the religious functions of the Palace. An image of the family Goddess is installed here. On this occasion His Highness appears before it wearing a special vesture and also a bracelet sacred to the Goddess. This bracelet is not removed nor does His Highness leave the Palace, untill the ninth of the festival. All his energy and attention are concentrated on the responsibilities of the occasion.

"Prior to the opening of the festival an auspicious hour is chosen for the setting up of the Maharaja's throne in the darbar hall. Again an auspicious hour is chosen for the ceremonial placing in the seat of the throne of an image of a lion. It was on a lion that Kali went into battle against the demons; and on ascending the lion's seat (Simhasana, from Simha, a lion, and Asana, a seat or posture). The Maharaja is regarded as becoming for the time the representative of the Goddess Chamundi and the intermediary for the conveyance of her blessings to the people".

It may be added that till now the Maharaja follows the traditions very rigidly with certain minor exceptions, such as, this year we have noted that contrary to Cousin's observation, the Maharaja did leave the Palace precincts to present prizes to the winners of a local Golf competition. The people who watch over the Dussehra festivals and functions naturally try to imitate the respect which the Maharaja shows towards Chamundesvari. In the anthem of the erstwhile Mysore State, there is reference to the goddess Gouri, and some people interpret her as a form of Chamundesvari deity. Then there are some people who are Devara Vokkalu (families with house deity) of Chamundesvari. All these have contributed in propagating the belief and worship of the deity in and around the city of Mysore.

COMPREHENSION OF THE DEITY

The people of Mysore city who observe the festival conceive Chamundesvari as a deity who looks after the welfare of the people of Mysore, and thus is often equated with *gram devta* (village god). For them she is the killer of 'Mahisha demon' as well as the killer of the spirits causing ailments and diseases. Her importance is shown by pointing out that she is the elder sister of all the local female deities, and she is great because she is the 'mane devaru' (family deity) of the Maharaja of Mysore.

The question now arises is, how the people who do not observe the Chamundesvari festival, but are important specialists, and/or interpreters of Hindu traditions conceive of the deity ? What is the nature of their involvement? To resolve it we contacted a few educated interpreters of Hindu traditions, and discussed the matter with them. They consisted of the members of Sanskrit College, *Maths*, Harikathakars (exponents of Purana), Dharmadhikaris (religions instructors of the Palace), sculpturists, idol makers and other professionals. Though they were largely of the Brahmin castes, there were also a few non-Brahmin among them. It may, however, be stated that though our sample is not exhaustive, we believe that the picture which emerged through the discussion may not be very different, even if we enlarge our sample.

Whether we look at these people from the viewpoint of caste, sect or profession, we observed that they all consider Chamundesvari as one of the female deities of higher tradition. To establish their point these educated people cite Sanskrit mantras (chanting), and Puranic stories. However, the Vaishnava Brahmin informants highlighted the deity as a form of Mahalakshmi (consort of Visnu), for they are not theoretically expected to associate themselves with the consort of Siva, but the Smarta Brahmin and other castes and sects conceive the deity in various ways. She is said to be a form of 'Parvati' 'Nanjundesvar's heart', 'Siva Sakti' 'Killer of Mahisha demon' (symbolic of spiritual force killing the brutal force) etc. Though the story of killing of the demon by Chamundesvari is known to all, various rationale are put forward to support the story. These rationale generally accord with the main themes of Hindu moral traditions such as 'good will prevail over evil', 'nature god-man relationship' etc. Some educated philosophers tried to rationalise the deity in terms of Hindu time axis (Chamundesvari as Kaliyuga deity). It has been observed that all castes and sects would like to visit the temple excepting the Sri Vaishnava Brahmin. But in reality whenever there is any occasion they do go to the temple, and rationalise their visit by stating that Chamundesvari is a form of Mahalakshmi. A few Vaishnava Brahmin boast of their catholicity by stating that they do visit the temple. Others do visit the temple when the need arises, but they never get involved in the worship of Chamundesvari arranged in various mohallas.

The difference between the comprehension of the Chamundesvari deity by the common people and literati is significant. As stated earlier, the people of the first category, mostly non-Brahmin, consider the deity as the presiding deity of Mysore city and its neighbouring region, whereas literati group who are mostly Brahmin consider her as a female force of the Almighty. The common people look at the deity from the point of view of the city and its neighbouring region, and their ideas are very similar to the belief about the other deities of the area, while the literati group looks at the deity from the point of higher Sanskritic tradition. They always try to correlate the deity with the deities of the Hindu sacred texts, and comment on the relationship with a philosophical undertone. Yet we would like to put a word of caution here. In spite of these differences, the viewpoints of the two groups do not exist in water-tight compartments. On the other hand, the interpenetration of these ideas is a common features, for there are many orthodox village-oriented, yet educated persons in the literati group, and large number of lay Hindu who philosophise each and everything.

Ritual Complex of the Uttanahalli Goddess

The temple of Uttanahalli goddess is situated on a hillock near the Uttanahalli village. Mythologically, the goddess is considered as the younger sister of Chamundesvari. While the deity is described by the Brahmin, Lingayat and Sivarchaka as 'Jwala Tripura Sundari', people of other castes regard her as a form of Maramma (village goddess). The priest of the temple is a Lingayat. The only important celebration held in honour of the deity is the annual festival. At the time of the annual festival, the ritual complex includes three important sacred performances. They are : (a) Kanna Kannadi (b) Bayi Bigada Habba, and (c) Made Huyyuvadu. These performances are described here briefly.

Kanna Kannadi : The celebration of Kanna Kannadi appears to be the symbolic display of Uttanahalli goddess to devotees. As there is no *utsava* murti in the temple, the Kanna Kannadi is arranged by the Lingayat priest of the temple at his home in the same way as is done for the Chamundesvari deity at the hills by the Sivarchaka priests. The articles, such as silver vessels used for the Kanna Kannadi of the Chamundesvari, are in fact, used here for the Uttanmahalli goddess also. The only difference is that when the Kanna Kannadi is made, it is enshrined in the house of the priest, and worship is made there. Devotees offer their *pooja* articles and *tambittu* to the Kanna Kannadi which are consecrated by the priest and returned to the devotees. At the time of the worship, he does not seem to have chanted any Sanskrit hymns or verses. When we made enquiries whether he used any chanting, he said, "our's is a *mouna* (silent) form of worship, and a *gramaya* (folk) type".

When the worship of the Kanna Kannadi is over, it is then taken out in the village for precession. The Kanna Kannadi deity is carried by unmarried girls who have not attained puberty. The washerman of the temple spreads clean cloths (*nadamadi*) on which the girl walks carrying the Kanna Kannadi. The Palace authorities of the Maharaja of Mysore send dynamo and petromax lights, band sets, and other honorific flags, etc. as a mark of reverence shown to the sister of chamundesvari. The Kanna Kannadi deity is taken on all important streets of the village accompanied by music, bands, light etc. Devotees in the various streets offer their *pooja* articles which are duly consecrated by the priest, and returned as Prasada. The ritual celebration starts at about ten in the night, and completed by the early morning. The Kanna Kannadi deity is taken to the temple of the Uttananhalli goddess in the village after the procession when the ritual is said to be complete.

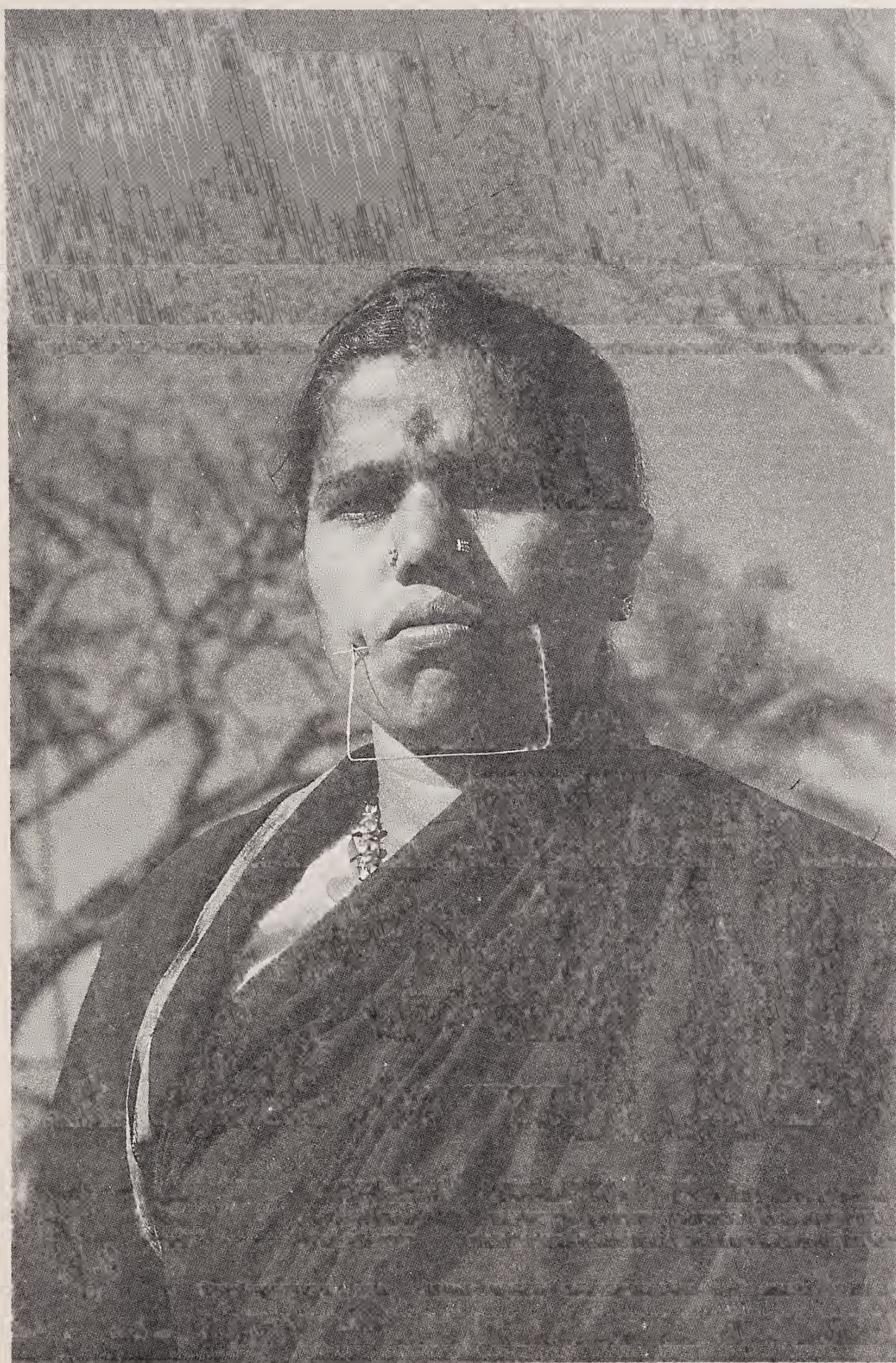
Bayi Bigada Habba : On the next morning of the Kanna Kannadi celebration, there is the locking and unlocking of mouth (Bayi Bigada Habba) ceremony in the precincts of the Uttanahalli temple. Many devotees make vows to the Uttanahalli goddess to redress their sufferings, and in the event of cure, they assure observance of the ritual of locking their mouth. On this day, several devotees are found to be locking their mouth. The Uttanahalli goddess is considered to be a very powerful deity, and there is conviction that and vows made to her do not go in vain. Devotees from neighbouring villages also make vows to the goddess.

The devotees who observed the ritual of locking the mouth take bath in the early morning, and go to the Lingayat priest at the temple for the ritual performance. The Lingayat priest uses a special kind of locks. A square lock is made with silver thread, one end of which is sharp and thin, and the other end is bent and hooked. The priest, while performing the ritual, pierces the cheeks of the devotees with the sharp end and locks it to the other hooked end. This secures as a lock, and the devotees cannot open their mouth. With their mouths thus locked, the devotees go to the temple, and offer their *pooja* articles to the deity. When the worship of the deity is over, the priest consecrates the *pooja* articles and returns them as Prasada. Later, the priest by removing the lock of the mouth unlocks it. For the sacred service, usually, the priest receives cash gifts of fifty paise for both the ritual act of locking and unlocking the mouth. The locks are provided by the priest himself, which are kept permanently, and they are used every year.

Made Huyyuvadu : Made Huyyuvadu, or ceremonial cooking, is another important feature of the annual festival. Mostly nonBrahmin devotees of the neighbouring villages, including the Chamundi Betta and Uttanahalli villagers, observe this ritual. Among the nonBrahmin castes, usually the Sivarchaka and Lingayat do not observe the ritual. On the next morning of the Kanna Kannadi ceremonial cooking is observed in the following manner. Outside the temple, on the spacious hillock, hearths are dug in rows. Usually separate rows of hearths are found to be dug for each caste of a village, and such rows are dug in large number, women devoted have to cook the food. The food consists of only rice mixed with green gram pulses. It is said that usually five seers of rice are cooked by all on the occasion. Women who undertake this task have to be ritually pure, that is, they have to take bath, and wear washed clothes. On the day, the homes in the villages are cleaned, whitewashed, and old earthen vessels are discarded. It is believed that in the event of any violation of the ritual purity, as stated above, the rice which is kept on the hearths would not be cooked properly. While women are engaged in the cooking, male members of to the temple, arrange for the worship of their *pooja* articles, and return with Prasada and *teertha* of the Uttanahalli goddess. When the food is ready, the *teertha* is sprinkled on the



Unlock the mouth - Oh! Priest



Ritual of *Bayi Biga* (Locking of mouth) - A vow fulfilled

cooked food. This ritual is called Made Huyyuvadu or ceremonial cooking. It may be noted that no non-vegetarian food is cooked there. When the Made Huyyuvandu ritual is over, the devotees return to their village ceremoniously, that is, the vessels containing the food are carried on the head by the women devotees. The devotees, then, are stated to be sacrificing animals in their homes in the name of the Uttanahalli goddess. Meat of the animals sacrificed is cooked, and then people partake in the meal.

We have observed that in case of the people of the lower castes of the Chamundi Betta village, particularly the Raja Parivara the festival of the Uttanahalli goddess is important. With a variation that the ceremonial cooking is done on the hills only, instead of the hillock of the Uttanahalli temple, the ceremony is observed in all its detail. As a matter of fact, this is the only festival for the people to observe with pomp, and significance, spending huge sum of money over dress, food and on animals for sacrifice.

Observance of Chamundesvari Festival in Mysore City

Chamundesvari festivals, as observed in two mohallas of the city, are described here. One of the mohallas is heterogeneous, and the other is homogeneous in caste compositions. These two cases illustrate how the annual celebrations in honour of the Chamundesvari deity are observed in the concerned mohallas.

Devaraja Mohalla : In the Devaraja mohalla, there is a shrine of the Mahakali. The priest (Beda caste) of the temple observes the Chamundesvari festival every year in this area. This area has the fixed boundary with five streets. When the festival is observed, people of this locality cooperate. It may be noted that people of the other neighbouring localities (with their fixed boundaries) do not participate in the ritual. The caste composition of the Mahakali areas, as we may call is heterogeneous. Though the priest takes the initiative for organising the worship, people of the area also help him. Contributions are collected from each household of the area. Usually, such contributions are not sought from Brahmins, Arasu, and Lingayatas. Though the date of the observance of the festival is not fixed, it is done in the month of February, on any selected Tuesday.

On a selected Tuesday, a huge pandal is built near the Mahakali shrine. In the evening, people of the mohalla go to the Dodda Kere (pond) accompanied by untouchable musicians, band sets, lights etc. A Smarta Brahmin is invited to officiate on the consecration ceremony of the Kalasas (sacred pot). The Brahmin draws water from a well near the Dobba Kere, and prepares two Kalasas, one for the Chamundesvari and the other for the Mahakali. Metalled pots are made as Kalasa. The Brahmin priest consecrates them by filling water, placing arecanut flowers, smearing with turmeric and sandal paste. Coconut and betel leaves are also placed. The Kalasas are carried on head by unmarried girls who have not attained puberty. When the procession first enters the area, one he goat is enshrined. This is usually called as Dhoolumari. The Kalasas are then enshrined in the pandal. Devotees offer *pooja* articles, and *tambittu* to the Kalasa deities. At that time, the priest of the Mahakali shrine, who is of a Beda (hunter) caste, officiates as a priest, for the Brahmin priest leaves the spot when the Kalasas are enshrined in the pandal. The *pooja* articles and *tambittu* are consecrated by the priest, and returned to the devotees as Prasada.

At about 9.30 in the night, the Kalasa deities are taken out in the ceremonial procession in the area and by about 1.00 A.M. the procession returns to the

shrine. At that time, animals are sacrificed in front of the Kalasa deities. The flesh of the animals sacrificed is distributed to the subscribers of the area as Prasada. In this areas, the Kalasa deities are kept in the pandal for two days, that is, on Wednesday and Thursday also, when devotees of the area offer prayers and *pooja* articles to the deities. The same priest officiated on those days. On Thursday evening, the Visarjana (dropping off) ceremony takes place. The Kalasa deities are carried by the priest, helped by other devotees, to a nearby well where the contents of the Kalasa, such as flowers, arecanut flowers, betal leaves, etc. are ceremoniously dropped in the water, thus completing the festival.

Gandhi Nagar : The Gandhi Nagar extension of Mysore city consists mainly of untouchable castes of Adi Jambava (Kannada Madiga), and Adikarnataka (Holeya). People of both the castes live as separate homogeneous groups. The Chamundesvari festival as observed by the Adi Jambava caste alone is described here.

In the locality of the Adi Jambava, the area of which is fixed, there is a shrine of the Chamundesvari deity. The date of worship is not fixed here also, but the observance of the Chamundesvari festival generally falls in February. Usually, Tuesday is chosen for the observance. Contribution from the people of the caste are sought by the priest of the Chamundi shrine in the area and elderly members of the localities who organise the worship.

On the selected day, people of the locality go to the Karanji Kere. A Brahmin is invited to officiate at the particular ritual of consecrating the Kalasa. One Kalasa is consecrated by the Brahmin priest. The contents of the Kalasa are stated to be same as described for the Devaraja mohalla. The role of the Brahmin after the consecration of the Kalasa of Chamundesvari is over, and he leaves the spot. The Kalasa-here consists of an earthen pot, though in other mohallas, usually, metallised vessels are used for the purpose. The old flag, made of leather (*dala*), of the Chamundi shrine is replaced here by a new one by the people and later hoisted. The Kalasa is carried on the head by unmarried girls of pre-puberty status, accompanied by music, band sets, lights etc. At the entrance of the locality, one he-goat is sacrificed (*dhoolumari*). In front of the Chamundi shrine, a pandal is built. The Kalasa deity, after the procession, is brought to the pandal, and enshrined there. The hereditary priest of the shrine officiates at the ritual occasion. Devotees of the caste offer *pooja* articles and *tambittu* to the Kalasa deity, and the priest consecrates and returns them to the devotees as Prasada. At the dead of night, animals are sacrificed to the Kalasa deity, and intestines, flesh and blood of the animals are mixed in rice, and the mixture is thrown as Bali in all important directions of the locality by a few castemen. This rite is observed mainly to propitiate and satiate the various spirits extant in the atmosphere haunting the people of the locality. Meat of the sacrificed animals is distributed among the subscribers.

The Kalasa deity is kept in the pandal until the next Tuesday. On that day the people of the locality observe a ritual known as *chikka pooja*. This particular ceremony is done in this locality and is not found to be observed in other mohallas. On the day of *chikka pooja*, individual families offer curd, rice and toddy to the deity. The priest, after consecration, returns these to the concerned devotees, as Prasada. When the *chikka pooja* is over, the Visarjana ceremony is observed. The Kalasa is ceremoniously taken to a neem tree situated near the area, and the contents of the Kalasa are dropped at the foot of the tree. With this celebration the annual festival of the Chamundesari is concluded.

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